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Language Consciousness in the Hebrew Bible during the Persian Period in Jerusalem:

A Sociological Study of the Hebrew Language in its Cultural and Political Context

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

Martin Luther Chan

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Language Consciousness in the Hebrew Bible during the Persian Period in Jerusalem:
A Sociological Study of the Hebrew Language in its Cultural and Political Context

by

Martin Luther Chan

Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles 2019

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Language consciousness is a ubiquitous phenomenon commonly observed in human speech communities with individuals exhibiting varying levels of awareness regarding the use and importance of language as a marker of religious, cultural, and ethnic identity. While some people may only demonstrate a limited, generalized awareness regarding the existence of different tongues and forms of speech, others possess a much more nuanced understanding of the specific traits and distinguishing features that separate languages and dialects from one another. Authors are sometimes cognizant of the purpose and function of language in society, and they wielded language as a tool to convey subtle messages to their audience. For instance, the combination of Aramaic and Hebrew in Late Biblical literature together with the use of

colloquialisms served as signals, drawing reader attention to specific elements of the literary content.

Language consciousness surges during the Persian and Late Biblical Period in the city of Jerusalem as a corollary of the tectonic shifts in the political scene and demographics of the region. During this period, the Judean community comes into greater contact with speakers of other languages (a classic example is from 1 Kings 18:26), as well as undergoes a rapid transition from monolingualism to bilingualism. These external factors are responsible for the marked increase of linguistic awareness during the time. I isolated three sociolinguistic conditions responsible for the intensification of language consciousness during this epoch: bilingualism, diglossia, and exposure to a variety of dialects. The postexilic Judean community experienced all three simultaneously, convoluting the linguistic landscape significantly. Consequently, individuals became conditioned to navigate frequently between multiple languages and dialects. This in turn raised levels of cognizance regarding the nuances and key features that distinguish linguistic varieties from one another, as well as solidified the affiliation between language and identity. Language consciousness exists before the exile, but it becomes even more acute during the Persian Period as a result of the political, social, and linguistic transformations (such as the increased use of Aramaic) of the time.

The dissertation of Martin Luther Chan is approved.

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2019

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תודה רבה לכם על תמיכתכם הרבה ועידודכם העקבי במשך כל השנים הללו.

شكراً جزيلاً لكم على دعمكم الكبير وتشجيعكم المستمر خلال هذه السنوات

Vielen Dank für eure Unterstützung und ständige Ermutigung während der Jahre

謝謝你們多年的支持和鼓勵

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Phenomenon of Language Consciousness

Language consciousness is a phenomenon commonly observed in numerous human speech communities. Many speakers exhibit some level of awareness regarding the existing differences between their native tongue and the linguistic varieties spoken by other people. A good modern example of this comes from the languages of former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Serbian, and Croatian, where speakers of these languages are able to locate key isoglosses to distinguish their dialects from those of others. Nonetheless, the degrees of cognizance are variable and constantly in flux, susceptible to the impact of geographic movement, social changes, and political upheaval. Furthermore, the amount of contact sustained between speakers of different languages plays an important role in shaping linguistic perceptions. In general, prolonged exposure and continual interaction with other communities tend to lead to an increased awareness of linguistic differences and distinguishing linguistic features. The opposite also holds true as an insulated speech community develops a less sophisticated understanding of existing vernacular differences.

Proving the existence of language consciousness is an undertaking that yields an unremarkable conclusion – namely that people have a basic level of awareness regarding language. However, determining the *level of sophistication* of linguistic awareness is a much more challenging endeavor that requires the examination of the historical and social context in which a language is used and spoken. The Hebrew Bible is a quintessential example of a text that is not only self-aware but also highly sophisticated in its approach to addressing the issues of language, speech, and linguistic differences. While sophistication cannot be quantitatively

measured, it can be argued that some speakers are aware of very particular differences that distinguish their dialects from those of others.

The primary objective of the dissertation is to analyze both the historical factors and linguistic conditions that contribute to the levels of language consciousness observed in late Biblical/ Persian Period literature. Writers of the Hebrew Bible were aware of the import of language – especially with rise of Aramaic as a rival language to Hebrew – as revealed by subtle literary moves on their part. These include the interspersing of non-Hebraic elements (Aramaic, non-standard Hebrew) to convey a subtle message about the use of other languages, as well as the ways language featured as a subject of discourse within the text (such as naming the Hebrew language “*Yehudit*” in the book of Nehemiah, as well as the explicit distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic in 1 Kings 18:26. These literary-redactional strategies serve as evidence of unmistakable awareness regarding how language functions in society as a tool for division and marker of identity.

Historical Factors that Elevate Language Consciousness

Much of the evidence of language consciousness analyzed and cited in this study is drawn from the Persian Period and late biblical literature.¹ Although language consciousness as a phenomenon among Hebrew speakers most certainly predates this era, the Persian Period is of

¹ Regarding the debate surrounding the definition of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), see Avi Hurvitz’s article, “The recent debate on late Biblical Hebrew: solid data, experts’ opinions, and inconclusive arguments.” *Hebrew Studies* 47.1 (2006): 191-210. Hurvitz acknowledges that while there is certain mixing between different kinds of Hebrew within portions of the biblical corpus, LBH is characterized by writers using neologisms from their time period: the Second Temple Period. “The late biblical writers, to a greater or lesser extent, adopted contemporary post-classical neologisms which belonged to the linguistic milieu of their time—the Second Temple period.”

particular interest because of the historical circumstances responsible for the fecundity of ideologically-driven literary production. The historical developments of this time period are responsible for the surge in linguistic awareness in the Jewish community. While the ancient Israelites were certainly no strangers to outside language and cultures, it is the exile to Babylon and the subsequent shifts to the political and linguistic landscape of the region that rendered the postexilic Judean community conscious of the linguistic differences that separated them from other people. In the centuries before the exile, during the Iron Age (1000-586 B.C.E), the inhabitants of the region were largely monolingual,² and even in the time immediately preceding the exile, the people continued to remain proficient in only their native *Yehudit* (or “Judean”), as illustrated by the fact that they were unable to understand the Aramaic spoken in 2 Kings 18:26. This certainly does not imply that the monolingual natives of Judah and Israel did not interact with members of other speech communities; however, the contact was likely not extensive enough to develop a multi-layered awareness of different language systems – with the exception of the elites and the scribal classes. For average individuals in Judah, they would have been able to recognize non-Hebraic idioms, but it is unlikely if pre-exilic Judeans would have accrued adequate linguistic knowledge via exposure to identify key isoglosses and unique linguistic nuances of other languages. Linguistic awareness likely existed at only a very rudimentary level.

However, the social and demographic changes ushered in by the Persian Period led to an amplification of language consciousness. As William Schniedewind observes, “language

² Bernard Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 26.

consciousness becomes especially acute in multilingual settings,”³ and it is during this era that the Judeans were confronted with a new multilingual reality. They found themselves immersed in an environment where they encountered numerous speech communities. Historical circumstances led to Aramaic being incorporated into the Judean language profile, and the introduction of Aramaic became a catalyst for raising the levels of language consciousness. In short, the events following the Babylonian conquest ushered in an unprecedented scale of cultural assimilation and language attrition. By learning Aramaic, the majority of those who were deported to Babylon became bilingual.⁴ Aramaic, originally a language of the Aramean empire, became widespread in the Near East as primary lingua franca. It is logical to assume that the transition from monolingualism to bilingualism was accompanied by an increasingly sophisticated understanding of languages and linguistic differences as Judeans adopted a second language in addition to their native Hebrew.

The exile marked a critical juncture in the history of the Judeans. As their homeland was destroyed due to the rise of belligerent foreign powers, language consciousness emerged as an important means to unite the diaspora and sustain a sense of community. In spite of external attempts to undermine and assimilate the exiled Judeans, a stateless group of people is able to retain their ethnic and religious distinctiveness through the preservation and deliberate use of their language. The books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah are all fixated on the notion of Judeans retaining some semblance of cultural and linguistic autonomy in the face of existential threats. In short, one could say that heightened language consciousness constitutes a reaction on the part of

³ William Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins Through the Rabbinic Period*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 29.

⁴ Ettiën N. Koffi, *Language and Society in Biblical Times* (International Scholars Publications, 1996), 115

the biblical writers to the tumultuous circumstances that rapidly altered the political and linguistic situation of the region. With a surge in linguistic awareness came a fervent desire to protect and preserve the Hebrew language as well as to prevent it from disappearing in the face of Aramaic's hegemony and intensifying stronghold over the Near East. Large portions of this dissertation are dedicated to examining how language consciousness can be seen in the literature of the Persian Period and how writers artfully achieve literary objectives in their strategic use of language and linguistic register.

Problematization of Terminology: Jew or Judean

Before proceeding further in the discussion of the Persian Period speech community in Jerusalem, we must clarify and problematize the terminology. The ethnic demonym for the descendants of Judah in Hebrew is יהודי, which remains consistent in different historical periods. The scholarly translations of the term, however, are significantly more nuanced. Scholars have encountered similar difficulties when attempting to translate the Greek version of the term, *Ioudaios*, with both “Judean” and “Jew” existing as possible English equivalents. Shaye D. Cohen argues that all occurrences of the Greek *Ioudaios* before the second century B.C.E. should be rendered as “Judean.”⁵ The term “Judean” originally served as an ethnic-geographic label to refer to individuals who traced their ancestral heritage to Judah. Only after the second century did *Ioudaios* undergo a semantic shift to include individuals who religiously allied themselves with the “Judeans” by subscribing to their faith and tenets, at which point it would be appropriate

⁵ S.J. Cohen, *The beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, varieties, uncertainties. Vol. 31.* (Univ of California Press, 2001), 70.

to translate using the term “Jews.”⁶ Although Hebrew does not distinguish – with modern Hebrew speakers using יהודי to refer to both ethnic and religious Jews – the English translations are more concerned with historical precision, and employing the appropriate terminology is necessary in order to situate the scope of the dissertation within the Persian Period. Because the nature of the research does not go beyond the third century B.C.E., we will adopt Cohen’s stance, with “Judean” being the preferred term to refer to the community of individuals who returned from exile in order to resettle in the land of “Judah.”

Other difficulties with terminology arise when referring to the religion of the Judean community. The languages of the Persian Period (Hebrew and Aramaic) did not contain a standard appellation for the set of religious practices of the Judean people.⁷ No term existed that would parallel the English term “Judaism.” Attaching an *-ism* to refer to the religion of a group of people would be anachronistic. Furthermore, it represents the imposition of a Western-centric way of understanding the world that did not exist in ancient times. Steven Mason writes: “This problem is well known in non-western traditions, where scholars often observe that the West has imposed the category of religion upon them, creating a convenient menu of –isms —

⁶ Ibid., 70. This point, however, has generated some debate regarding the position of individuals who converted, aligning themselves with the Jewish faith and therefore became “Jews.” Lester Grabbe points this out in his review on Cohen’s work. See Lester Grabbe, Review of “*The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*” by Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 62.1, 2003, 72

“There are two areas where I found myself in some disagreement with Cohen...Cohen argues that conditions of the Persian Period first led to the idea of Gentiles attaching themselves to the Jewish people by accepting the Jewish God and that this idea is not found in the Hebrew Bible. I am not convinced. Ruth is surely an example of a woman who becomes a part of the Jewish ethnic and religious community.”

⁷ Steven Mason. “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History.” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 460

Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism—for the western observer.”⁸ However, any attempt to reinvent terminology to render it appropriate for the nature of our discussion far exceeds the scope of the research. In this study, we will eschew the modern, Western-oriented label of “Judaism” and instead refer to cultic practices and beliefs of the community as “the religion of the Judeans” in order to avoid being entangled in the ongoing debate surrounding terminology and ethnic versus religious labels.

Linguistic Phenomena Likely to Induce Higher Levels of Language Consciousness

The situating of the Judean speech community in the Persian Period is important for understanding how historical events such as demographic shifts, mass deportations, and forced acculturation are partially responsible for the surge in linguistic awareness during this time period.

However, in order to fully understand the existence of language consciousness within the Bible, it is not only critical to examine the historical and social backdrop of the composition of biblical literature, but it is also necessary to analyze the profiles of Judean languages in the Near East, namely, Hebrew and Aramaic. Just as social changes and political disruptions have significant impact on perceptions of language, certain types of pre-existing linguistic conditions also contribute to elevating the level of language consciousness among speakers. This dissertation seeks to elucidate what these conditions are and how they raise levels of linguistic awareness. Although the appellations “Hebrew” and “Aramaic” are generally assumed to refer to single languages, the reality is much more complicated, with the names of the languages actually

⁸ Ibid., 481.

disguising complex linguistic systems. Each linguistic system is comprised of numerous dialects, some of which differed significantly from one another in phonology and lexicon. One of the goals of this dissertation is to problematize the traditional view of biblical languages.

Elucidating the complexities and intricacies of the Judean linguistic profile is necessary for better understanding how language consciousness has always existed as a natural phenomenon, or the expected consequence of speakers having to navigate complex linguistic scenarios in their day-to-day existence.

The first linguistic condition responsible for giving rise to higher levels of language consciousness is bilingualism. Knowledge of multiple languages requires the speaker to be cognizant of the appropriate situations and occasions for using each tongue. In modern psycholinguistic studies of the bilingual brain, this ability to differentiate between languages is known as “metalinguistic awareness.”⁹ Speakers are aware of the arbitrariness of language – for example, the cluster of sounds forming the word “table” do not intrinsically have that semantic value.¹⁰ Recognizing the arbitrariness of language allows a speaker to navigate between two distinct idioms and to understand the implications of using one over another. Apart from terminology, the concept of metalinguistic awareness is nearly identical to language consciousness. It is, however, difficult to know how much is conscious and how much is active. Furthermore, a speaker must be constantly alert and attuned to situational cues that allow him or her to switch between speech forms. Applying data from modern psycholinguistics provides evidence that bilingualism leads to the development of linguistic awareness. Alternating between

⁹ James Cummins. “Bilingualism and the Development of Metalinguistic Awareness.” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 9 (1978): 131

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 136

two written languages is indicative of a high level of consciousness on the part of the writers, just as code-switching in spoken language has been found to necessitate active awareness on the part of the speaker. Of course, there are limits to the awareness of the speakers, as pointed out by Michael Silverstein, where he writes: “For the point I wish to make is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make a native speaker take account of those readily-discernible facts of speech as action that (s)he has no ability to describe for us in his or her own language.”¹¹

A second sociolinguistic condition responsible for elevating the level of language consciousness among interlocutors is diglossia, defined by Charles Ferguson in his classic article as languages characterized by a high variety for formal communications and a low variety used in everyday life.¹² Modern languages like Arabic and Swiss German have been cited as quintessential examples of diglossic languages,¹³ each having numerous colloquial vernaculars united under the canopy of a standardized formal register. In essence, these languages are not single tongues but rather are a group of related dialects that form a complex and internally diverse linguistic network, with speakers encountering and switching between numerous varieties of the same language. Linguistic research has shown that navigating multiple registers of the same language is a complex cognitive task that produces similar results as balancing between disparate languages.¹⁴ This means that a bilingual English-Spanish speaker would

¹¹ Michael Silverstein, *The Limits of Awareness. Sociolinguistic Working Paper No. 84* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Library, 1981), 382.

¹² Charles A. Ferguson, “Diglossia,” *WORD* 15, (1959): 325.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 326-327.

¹⁴ Studies conducted on Arabic-speaking children show that switching between standard and colloquial Arabic is cognitively as exerting as switching between two different languages, such as Hebrew and Russian. For further reading, see Raphiq Ibrahim. “The cognitive basis of diglossia in Arabic: Evidence

experience a similar level of linguistic awareness as an ostensibly monolingual Swiss German speaker, proficient in an oral vernacular as well as standard German. This has significant implications for our study, as we will contend that both Hebrew and Aramaic were not single languages but consisted of numerous *linguistic varieties*. Both Hebrew and Aramaic were comprised of a multiplicity of oral dialects that shared a common written form (however, we must keep in mind that there were numerous written dialects as well, even if they all shared a common script). Therefore, Hebrew and Aramaic speakers would have presumably exhibited a remarkable level of language consciousness as a consequence of these complex linguistic conditions, and the textual and literary evidence seem to corroborate this. Writers, regardless of which language they were using, recognized not only the differences between different languages but the different speech forms within the same tongue. For example, the Hebrew within the Bible seems to feature sporadic insertions of colloquial language or traces of northern varieties, a view promulgated most notably by Gary Rendsburg. A similar argument has been made by Frank Polak who claims to have discovered a strand of Western dialect within the Aramaic of Ezra.¹⁵ Although the postulated influence of colloquial registers on the Biblical text is not the focus of this study, these discoveries are significant for a better understanding of language consciousness. By acknowledging the existence of diglossia within Hebrew and Aramaic, one can make more accurate conjectures regarding how the presence of these sociolinguistic conditions would have shaped and accentuated awareness on the part of the speakers. Speakers of Hebrew likely spoke one way, yet were taught “proper” conventions for

from a repetition priming study within and between languages." *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* 2 (2009): 93.

¹⁵ Frank Polak. "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire." Oded Lipschits. *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 589-590

reading and writing. With adequate training and practice, they perhaps became accustomed to the frequent interchange between registers and developed a sense of awareness regarding language use.

The third linguistic phenomenon responsible for intensifying language consciousness among speakers is exposure to sundry dialects and linguistic varieties. When interlocutors come into contact with other dialectal communities, they will inevitably detect differences between their native vernacular and that of others. This basic level of awareness is known as “dialect consciousness.”¹⁶ Languages like Hebrew and Aramaic had at least one standardized version which predominated as the primary language of scriptures and sacred texts. However, there were likely numerous colloquial vernaculars that varied across regions and communities. Frequent exposure to a variety of speech forms would render speakers conscious not only of the fact that phonological and lexical differences existed, but also of the specific nature of these differences. This dissertation will argue that these two Semitic languages were both diglossic as well as colloquially diverse. As a result, speakers often adopted different registers within the same language depending on the context, conditioning them to become cognizant of specific distinguishing characteristics. A corollary of frequent exposure to different varieties is an increase in dialectal consciousness and hence a more complex understanding of the linguistic nuances and isoglosses that separate different oral vernaculars from one another.

The three aforementioned sociolinguistic conditions contributed to making language consciousness a pervasive and potent force in the postexilic Judean community. The tumult of the exile left an indelible mark on their linguistic profile, with individuals in the community

¹⁶ Takesi Sibata, “Consciousness of Dialect Boundaries.” in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, ed. Dennis R. Preston. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 39

experiencing the simultaneous effects of all three of these phenomena. They became bilingual, and the languages they spoke were both diglossic and dialect-heavy. Some of the returnees (mostly scribes, not most people) were proficient in both Hebrew and Aramaic. In both cases, they likely were proficient in both a colloquial variant as well as a formal written standard. The linguistic situation of the postexilic Judean community likely would have become stratified, being made up of multiple languages and layers of language. It seems that this intense complexity would likely have resulted in individuals becoming more cognizant of the function of language, with each language and sub-language having a unique role in daily life. The books of Ezra and Daniel show that Hebrew and Aramaic operated differently in the context of Judean daily life.

Drawing extensively from the research of Frank Polak,¹⁷ we conclude that there were at least four identifiable strands that coalesced to form the linguistic tapestry of the postexilic Judean community during the Persian Period: Official Aramaic, vernacular Aramaic, Written Hebrew, and vernacular Hebrew. In this case, diglossia becomes clear. Using Ferguson's terms, Official Aramaic was the "high" variety adopted for formal correspondence and communication. An unnamed Western Aramaic dialect served as the "low" variety and colloquial counterpart. Written Hebrew, supplanted largely by Official Aramaic, was relegated to the status of scribal art and a religious language, while spoken Hebrew was the language spoken at home and for

¹⁷ Polak, "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire," 596. Polak elaborates extensively on three parts of the Jewish linguistic profile: written Aramaic (official Aramaic), written Hebrew, and vernacular Hebrew. He mentions the traces of Western Aramaic dialect that permeated into the written works of Ezra: "The fact that western features prevail in the narrator's account itself, is not less significant. Since the audience addressed by this narrative is the Judean community, we infer that the Aramaic used by this community contained more western features than Official Aramaic proper." For further reading and research regarding the prevalence of Western Aramaic dialectal influence within the Aramaic passages of the Bible, c.f. Timothy Hogue, "Return from Exile: Diglossia and Literary Code-Switching in Ezra 1-7." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. 130, no.1 (2018): 54-68.

informal conversations. Navigating this complex network of languages and dialects requires increased mental dexterity as well as constant awareness of the proper environment and circumstances for the use of each. Based on the structure and content of late Biblical texts (e.g. Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther), one could argue the following: the convoluted nature of the linguistic situation of the postexilic Jewish community rendered writers of late biblical texts more aware of the subtle differences separating these four linguistic varieties from one another. In addition, they also became more cognizant of the implications for using one language or variety over another with Aramaic serving as a language of formality and Hebrew functioning as the language of religion and spirituality. During the Persian Period, linguistic awareness became an irrevocable part of the collective conscience of postexilic Jewry, largely a result of its transition from a monolingual society to a multilingual, multidialectal community. Thus, although language consciousness was a perennial phenomenon that predated this time period, the political, social, and demographic changes during the late biblical period led to the intensification of language consciousness and resulted in individuals developing a more sophisticated and detailed understanding of linguistic differences.

Language Consciousness and Social Phenomena

While the dissertation concentrates on examining on linguistic phenomena that elevate language consciousness, it is also important to point on the difficulties in establishing some of these connections. First of all, much of the work is theoretical and relies heavily on developing hypotheses for unresolved questions. It is impossible to be certain regarding the intentions of redactors and writers of the Biblical text, nor can we fully determine to what extent they were influenced by various social and political conditions. Furthermore, our investigation of the

dynamics of ancient speech communities is complicated by textual limitations and a general dearth of data regarding the interactions and relationships between different groups of interlocutors.

It is also important to clarify that while the aforementioned sociolinguistic conditions are believed to have been instrumental in the elevation of language consciousness during the Persian Period, one cannot exclude other possibilities. It is quite possible that while awareness of linguistic differences leads to political divisions, the reverse might be true as well, where pre-existing political tensions results in individuals actively seeking ways to distinguish themselves linguistically from other groups of peoples. One example of such a case would be Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian,¹⁸ where subtle dialectal distinctions are purposefully accentuated to create new linguistic identities for people, divided along ethnic and religious boundaries.

Moreover, bilingualism – although argued to be a significant factor in the surge of linguistic awareness – is not requisite for it. It is possible to be monolingual yet still demonstrate a sense of language consciousness in that one develops a “meta-language” – in other words, “language about language.”¹⁹ Examples of meta-language include asking questions to clarify the meaning of specific words – i.e, what is a “province”? what is “wisdom”? It is within this context that one can see the power of language.²⁰ It is crucial to point this out before proceeding further in our discussion of language consciousness, so that one does not operate under the

¹⁸ Jim Hlavac. "Pre- and post-conflict language designations and language policies: Re-configuration of professional norms amongst translators of the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages." *International Journal of Translation Studies* (2015): 238-272.

¹⁹ Jeff Verschueren, “Notes on the Metapragmatic Awareness in Language Use,” in *Metalinguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives*, ed. Adam Jaworski, Nikolas Coupland, Darlusz Galasinski (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 54.

²⁰ Alessandro Duranti, “Agency in Language,” *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 468.

fallacy that bilingualism is a necessity for linguistic awareness, as this most certainly is not the case.

Methodology and Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation is informed by the fields of psycholinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Analogies from modern languages proved to be a useful source for comparison when attempting to reconstruct the linguistic landscape of the Ancient Near East. As we have no native speakers of ancient Hebrew and Aramaic, linguistic anthropology provides the lens through which we can animate ancient languages. Linguistic anthropology not only enhances the appreciation of the diversity of the communicative experience, but also supplements traditional sociolinguistic methods through “its emphasis on examining *in vivo* the pragmatic meaning of human activities and particularly the situated social creation of such meaning.”²¹ Linguistic anthropology allows for the understanding the nature of communication and speech from the point of view of real life individuals. Therefore, extrapolating relevant methods and approaches from the discipline enables the animation of textual phenomena and reconstruct language attitudes and associated behaviors of ancient Hebrew speakers using the same principles that govern modern speech communities. Terms like *iconization* help to explain the formation of language ideologies.²² *Iconization* refers to how particular linguistic features are accentuated and stand out to speakers as distinct.

²¹ Kathryn A. Woolard, “Why Dat now? Linguistic-anthropological Contributions to the Explanation of Sociolinguistic Icons and Change.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12, no.4 (2008): 434

²² Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal. “Language ideology and linguistic differentiation,” in *Linguistic anthropology: A reader*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Blackwell LTD, 2009).

In addition to linguistic anthropology, psycho-linguistic studies provide information about the cognitive processes involved in bilingualism and language mastery. For example, studies of Arabic school children in Israel have shown that switching between dialect and the formal variety is as arduous and cognitively challenging as for bilinguals who speak two completely different languages (e.g. Hebrew and English, Hebrew and Russian).²³ Such studies are useful for assessing and measuring the degree of language consciousness in speakers, and this data can be applied retroactively to the Judean speech community.

Furthermore, as written language is not fully representative of the variety and complexity of spoken language, many of our claims regarding the dynamics of the Judean speech community are speculative. However, applying the *uniformitarian principle*, which states that linguistic forces in the present would have operated in the past as well,²⁴ allows us to draw from studies of modern languages and speech communities in order to fill in the lacuna. Modern languages are complex and constantly in flux, and the languages of the Judean community in Jerusalem are likely to have experienced similar dynamics. Speakers of modern tongues also demonstrate high levels of awareness regarding dialect boundaries and often develop language ideologies based on speech differences. Likewise, we argue that speakers of Hebrew and Aramaic during the Persian Period would have exhibited similar proclivities.

The chapters of the dissertation are organized according to the three sociolinguistic phenomena responsible for heightening levels of language consciousness and sharpening the

²³ Zohar Eviatar and Raphiq Ibrahim. "Bilingual is as bilingual does: Metalinguistic abilities of Arabic-speaking children." *Applied Psycholinguistics* 21, no.4 (2000): 451-471.

²⁴ Suzanne Romaine, *Language in Society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122. Romaine argues that the uniformitarian principle is a fundamental concept in sociolinguistics today. "The working

perceptiveness of interlocutors regarding minute linguistic differences: bilingualism, diglossia, and dialectal diversity. The chapters will be grouped thematically, and each of them will evaluate the impact of these sociolinguistic realities on the development and intensification of preexisting language consciousness during this time period.

Bilingualism – Chapters Two and Three

The second and third chapters of the dissertation are dedicated to examining the phenomenon of bilingualism within late biblical literature. Prior to Babylonian deportation and exile, members of the scribal class were functionally bilingual; however, forced immersion and acculturation led to bilingualism becoming a ubiquitous phenomenon across social classes. During the time of the composition of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, Hebrew was not displaced or eradicated, but Aramaic had assumed an increasingly significant role in the postexilic Judean community. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the books of Ezra and Daniel were written in both Hebrew and Aramaic. However, the languages do not overlap in function within the text. Each language conforms to a specific, preconfigured role that accurately reflects its place within everyday Judean life. Bilingualism has the unsurprising effect of rendering speakers more cognizant of the suitable occasions for language use, thereby elevating their level of language consciousness. In the Judean community, Hebrew was reserved for matters of spiritual importance, while Aramaic served as the primary idiom for official communication and formal affairs. Furthermore, the switch between languages occurred only in the appropriate context, such as using Aramaic to document the interactions between the king and his officials, corresponding to the domains each language occupied in real life. The text is explicitly self-

conscious of each instance of language switching and ensures that there are adequate situational cues to justify the transition from Hebrew to Aramaic and vice versa.

Although Daniel was likely written after Ezra, we have chosen not to adhere to the chronology of composition and have elected to first analyze bilingualism in Daniel before moving to Ezra. This is because the use of bilingualism in Daniel is quite straightforward. The text begins by narrating the deportation of Daniel and his comrades from Jerusalem to Babylon, while documenting their struggle to retain religious fealty in spite of external pressure to acculturate. The content is of a religious nature, and Hebrew is the language of composition. However, beginning in 2:4b, we transition to the royal court, witnessing the exchange between the king and his officials. It is at this point that the narrative changes, and Aramaic becomes the language of composition. Subsequent chapters pertain to the affairs and accounts of succeeding monarchs. Imperial events and history are appropriately documented in Aramaic, the language of empire. Finally, the text transitions back to Hebrew when recording all but one of Daniel's visions; the content of these visions is of religious significance, making the use of Hebrew the logical choice for the authors. In Ezra, the Aramaic is interwoven with the Hebrew and is the primary language of two pericopes: 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26. Both sections feature transcripts of written correspondence addressed to King Darius. Aramaic is used here because this would have been the language used in order to communicate with royal authority. Preserving the documents in the original tongue is an explicit case of linguistic alteration. However, in Ezra, the Hebrew language is perceived and wielded as a marker of identity. The careful alignment between language use and literary content in both books reflects a high level of language consciousness. This strong sense of linguistic awareness is the corollary of intense political and demographic shifts that rendered the Judean community susceptible to foreign influence.

Diglossia – Chapters Four and Five

Chapters four and five investigate the effects of diglossia in increasing the linguistic awareness of interlocutors. In order to do so, one must first prove the existence of diglossia within Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages of the postexilic Judean community. The fourth chapter concerns itself specifically with the diglossic nature of Hebrew. The Bible was composed in a relatively uniform register of language, which I will call “Standard Biblical Hebrew.”²⁵ However, we argue that this variety of the language did not necessarily correspond to the oral vernaculars spoken by people. Instead, Standard Biblical Hebrew was the result of textualization and scripturalization during the Late Iron Age, especially the Josianic Period.²⁶ The Hebrew used in scriptures would be venerated and preserved, even if it differed substantially from the colloquial varieties native to people. This would create a gap between the written and spoken versions of Hebrew, resulting in diglossia. Modern Standard Arabic serves as an excellent comparison, with the redaction of the Quran leading to Arabic becoming standardized. The fifth chapter examines the presence of diglossia in Aramaic, with the imperial standard (“Official Aramaic”) standing in contrast to regional dialects, which eventually evolved into separate, independent languages. We contend that postexilic Judeans would have been familiar with at least two varieties of Aramaic, with some texts revealing traces of multiple dialectal sources.

²⁵ This term is borrowed from the research of William Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 137. The term Standard Biblical Hebrew was developed to describe the relative linguistic homogeneity of Biblical Hebrew. “This reflects a horizon of collecting and editing of many biblical traditions, one that seems to span from 725 to 500 B.C.E., and the languages of these texts may be described as SBH.”

²⁶ For further reading on the textualization that occurred during this time period, see Schniedewind, William, *How the Bible Became a Book*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91-96

Proving the existence of diglossia in Hebrew and Aramaic has significant implications for our understanding of language consciousness. Speakers of diglossic languages must learn two distinct registers of the same language. However, sometimes the differences between the two registers are quite immense, thereby rendering the experience of switching between the two similar to that of a bilingual alternating between two unrelated languages. This would raise levels of consciousness, with interlocutors being fully aware of which linguistic conventions and elements are typical of each register. Diglossia in Hebrew and Aramaic adds a further layer of complexity to the linguistic landscape of the postexilic Judean community, and language consciousness would be an expected development of frequent exposure and interchange between standard and colloquial varieties.

Internal Linguistic Diversity and Dialect Consciousness – Chapter Six

Dialect consciousness is defined as the intuitive sense and generalized awareness of speakers regarding the differences between their native vernacular and other dialects.²⁷ This tends to be the corollary of prolonged and frequent exposure to numerous spoken varieties. However, writers of the Hebrew Bible exhibited a much more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of these differences. Not only did they recognize different dialects, but they were also able to replicate them in writing, both lexically and morphologically. While this dissertation concentrates on the Persian Period and the surge of language consciousness during the time, chapter six looks at a few examples of pre-exilic literature in order to provide a lens through

²⁷ Takesi Sibata, “Consciousness of Dialect Boundaries.” in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, ed. Dennis R. Preston. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 39

which we can understand dialect consciousness, before redirecting our attention to the development of the phenomenon during postexilic times. Judges 12, for instance, is an excellent case study and allows us to read Nehemiah 13 in a new light.

Chapter six of the dissertation argues that there was great dialectal diversity within ancient Hebrew. Unfortunately, textual attestation of different spoken dialects is limited because of the general uniformity of written biblical Hebrew. Nonetheless, there are adequate linguistic anomalies that can be attributed to the permeation of dialectal influence, allowing us to reconstruct a partial picture of the internal linguistic diversity that must have existed in Hebrew.

The chapter also evaluates four different kinds of dialectal variation within Hebrew. Firstly, traces of a northern dialect or group of dialects can be found in Biblical accounts featuring characters from the geographic north. This is the case with the Elisha-Elijah narratives, which contain numerous anomalous lexemes that were the result of the interpolation of dialectal features into the text in order to underscore the northern heritage of the prophets. Secondly, foreign-sounding Hebrew can be found in parts of Job and in the Jacob-Laban story. This was the writers' way of emphasizing the non-Israelite ethnicity of the characters. Thirdly, the Shibboleth incident of Judges 12 shows how a minute phonological difference can become a marker of identity and lead to the construction of linguistic ideologies. Lastly, chapter six also includes a discussion of why Ashdodite, an intelligible dialect of Aramaic, was considered to be a foreign language for the Judeans. All of these are manifestations of dialect consciousness found in the Hebrew Bible, with writers demonstrating an extremely sophisticated understanding of the linguistic intricacies that separate dialects and dialect groups from one another.

CHAPTER 2: BILINGUALISM IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL AS EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS

On the Dating of Daniel

Before proceeding in our discussion of language consciousness as seen within the Book of Daniel, it is critical that we first direct our attention to the dating of the book. This is especially important because the chronological scope of the dissertation is the Persian Period, yet the composition of the book of Daniel does not entirely date to this era. In fact, the latter half of the book (chapters 7-12) are argued by many scholars to date to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The shift in the content of the book is an immediate signal of the disparate times of composition between the first and second halves. While the first six chapters center around the experiences of Daniel and his comrades within the regal court, there is a marked shift beginning in chapter 7. “In Daniel 7-12, the apocalypses are focused on political events of the Hellenistic period...Much of the material is specifically focused on the events of 167-164 B.C.E.”²⁸ This was during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the desecration of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, ushering in an era of severe oppression and restriction to Jewish freedoms. It seems the second half of Daniel was in many ways a response to the political and religious struggles that the community faced. John J. Collins identifies Daniel 7:1-14 and 8:1-12 (both are eschatological visions) as part of “one complex of events centering on the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.”²⁹ The construction of these visions as a response to ongoing political affairs and tensions of the time confirms a mid-second century dating of the second half of the book. The

²⁸ Carol Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press), 1.

²⁹ John J. Collins, “The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High in the Book of Daniel.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 54.

references to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his repressive regime are unmistakable and the last chapters of the book of Daniel represent “a new form of resistance and a new form of hope in the face of the persecution.”³⁰

Although the literary evidence seems to point quite clearly to a later dating for chapters 7-12, the dating of the first half (chapters 1-6) is a less straightforward endeavor. First, it is important to clarify that most of the first half is written in Aramaic (with the book beginning in Hebrew before transition to Aramaic in 2:4), as much of the argument for the dating of the book comes from an examination of the linguistic evidence and, in particular, an investigation of the nature of the Aramaic. In K.A. Kitchen’s classical article, he argues that around ninety percent of the Aramaic lexicon found in the Aramaic portions of Daniel is attested in earlier strata of the language. “Among the nine-tenths, words found in Old and Imperial Aramaic documents in the ninth to fifth centuries BC would in themselves allow of any date for the Aramaic of Daniel from the sixth century BC onwards.”³¹ While this article is part of an older generation of scholarship on Daniel, it is important to first mention its central claim, as later scholars draw and derive their own arguments regarding linguistic dating from Kitchen’s work. Robert Vasholz believes that later discoveries from Qumranic sources (to which Kitchen did not have access during his time) show a closer connection between the Aramaic of 11Q^gJob and Biblical Aramaic, with the Biblical Aramaic being slightly older. Based on this, he argues for a pre-second century dating of the Book of Daniel.³² It must be noted that such a dating would only be relevant for the Aramaic

³⁰ Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 2.

³¹ K.A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. D.J. Wiseman, (London: Tyndale Press), 1965, 32.

³² Robert I. Vasholz, “Qumran and the Dating of Daniel,” *JETS* 21 (1978): 318.

portions of Daniel (chapters 2-7). However, Vasholz goes further to claim that there could not have been a large chronological disparity between the Hebrew and Aramaic sections. “And for those who would hold to the composite authorship of Daniel, it means that the Hebrew sections of the book must also be older. If the Aramaic of Daniel suggests a pre-second century dating, then the Hebrew section must be given the same consideration.”³³

However, James E. Miller has a different opinion altogether regarding the dating of the book of Daniel. He believes that the book of Daniel was compiled and redacted at one time, but from two older sources, one Hebrew document and one Aramaic document.³⁴ Therefore, the present bilingual form is relatively late; however, the original documents were older. Of course, there remains some ambiguity with this argument, as he avoids attributing the sources to a specific chronological time frame. In our study, the literary and linguistic evidence will be interpreted as follows: the Hebrew portions (especially chapters 8-12 and likely chapter 1 as well) date to the Hellenistic period, due to the allusions to Antiochus IV Epiphanes seen in the eschatological visions. However, we argue that the Aramaic portion is likely older and could possibly be a product of the Persian Period, given the nature of the language.

Linguistic Consciousness as a Means of Navigating Identity

Language consciousness serves as a means to navigate and assert identity, especially in multilingual settings, where it becomes particularly acute.³⁵ When immersed in an environment

³³ Ibid., 320.

³⁴ James E. Miller, “The Redaction of Daniel,” *JSOT* 52 (1991): 123.

³⁵ William Schniedewind. *A Social History of Hebrew*, 28.

with a multiplicity of languages and divergent speech forms, speakers inevitably become more aware of the import of language in marking social, ethnic, and religious distinctions. As Aramaic established an impregnable stronghold within the Judean speech community, speakers found themselves caught in a bind. They felt obliged to adopt Aramaic out of practicality and the need to gain social acceptance, yet simultaneously they hoped to maintain and preserve Hebrew. The linguistic predicament in which individuals found themselves was characterized by much internal conflict regarding the designation of roles to each respective language. The composition of the book of Daniel and the nature of its narrative reveal the multilingual backdrop of its redactors as well as the underlying linguistic tensions that characterized the time period, as authors sought to accommodate the language of the majority without forfeiting their native tongue. The redaction and production of literature from this era reflect a desire to achieve a compromise. Without even analyzing the content of the text, a cursory perusal of the work reveals a deliberate and unmistakable attempt to resolve latent inter-lingual friction. Daniel is the only book in the Biblical corpus that features an equal portion of writing in both Hebrew and Aramaic,³⁶ revealing a concerted effort to establish a linguistic equilibrium. The bilingual structure of Daniel is as follows: the book begins the narrative in Hebrew before transitioning to Aramaic in 2:4b, with the introduction of the Babylonian king and his officials. The subsequent chapters all pertain to the affairs of the royal house, and the text continues in Aramaic until 7:28,

Schniedewind discusses how the people of pre-exilic Judah led a largely monolingual existence, which did not necessitate them to specify or mention which language was used during creation. It is only during the exile and the post-exilic periods that the Judeans/Jews had contact and exposure with other peoples and languages, and this is when they began to develop a greater awareness of the language they spoke in contrast to the languages of other peoples. For instance, it is in Nehemiah 13 that the Hebrew language is given an appellation for the first time: *Yehudit* (יהודית).

³⁶ Anthea E. Portier-Young, “Languages of Identity and Obligation: Daniel as Bilingual Book.” *Vetus Testamentum* 60, no. 1 (2010): 98–115.

after which the book returns to Hebrew until the end. It is our contention, therefore, that literary works like Daniel are the direct product of language consciousness. It is this acute awareness of the significance of language for identity that propelled the author to confer equal attention and import to two languages within the same text.

Some scholars have proposed that the sudden transition between languages within the book of Daniel is evidence of hasty composition and carelessness on the part of the writer.³⁷ These scholars argue that the author evinced a general disregard to which language was being used. He began in Hebrew but allowed the narrative to be interrupted in the middle by a protracted block of Aramaic text, before finally resuming his account in the first language. Such a view is untenable for a number of reasons. Firstly, writing is far more deliberate and intricate a development than speaking. It is not merely a transcription of oral communication; it involves a high level of metalinguistic awareness.³⁸ In actuality, writing is a much more meticulous and complex a process than it is generally acknowledged to be. It requires immense planning and precision, as well as numerous small decisions regarding the use correct diction, proper formulation, and the articulation of ideas.³⁹ Given the judgment and preparation involved in the composition of a text, it is highly unlikely that the writer unwittingly changed course to Aramaic for several chapters, neglected to use Hebrew, before realizing and correcting his error.

³⁷ Seth Schwartz, "Hebrew and Imperialism in Jewish Palestine," in *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 60.

³⁸ Wolfgang Wildgen, *The Evolution of Human Language: Scenarios, Principles, and Cultural Dynamics*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 87 – Wildgen writes the following, "The deeper source for the evolution of writing was therefore the transition between spoken language as an unconscious routine...to meta-linguistic awareness, linguistic consciousness."

³⁹ Rosalind Horowitz, "Orality in Literacy: The Uses of Speech in Written Language," in *Composing Social Identity in Written Language*, ed. Donald L. Rubin, (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), 49

Therefore, any argument of inadvertent switching due to sloppiness would be more applicable to spoken language – and less for a written text. However, even for spoken language, the rapid and abrupt transition to another language – known as “code-switching” – may not necessarily be the result of negative factors such as disorganization and lack of awareness on the part of the interlocutor, as commonly believed.⁴⁰ The belief that Biblical writers were merely sloppy speakers who transcribed their chaotic way of speaking is a problematic view and stems from a misconception regarding bilingualism. Modern studies in applied linguistics can provide better clarity regarding how the practice bilingualism is actually a cognitively demanding task for the speaker.

Functional Bilingualism and the Book of Daniel

The composition of the book of Daniel and the bilingual nature of the text are more likely to represent the complex linguistic conditions of the time, with two languages vying for dominance in the Judean speech community. However, while it is apparent that most individuals within this community were bilingual during the Persian Period out of necessity, a more precise description is still wanting. “Bilingual” as a term does not confer adequate information for an accurate reconstruction of the Judean speech community in exile; it simply denotes the fact that an individual or group of individuals is able to communicate in more than one linguistic variety. As a result, scholars in applied linguistics have attempted to narrow down the terminology to afford more clarity and specificity to the concept of bilingualism. One of the most notable terms

⁴⁰ Harriet Luria, *Language and Linguistics in Context: Readings and Applications for Teachers*, (Routledge, 2012), 87

Also c.f. Ritchie and Bhatia, “Social and Psychological Factors”, pp. 349-350.

that have emerged is *functional bilingualism*, defined as an individual possessing adequate mastery of both languages to allow him or her to function with relative ease in society.⁴¹ This term has arisen frequently to the context of immigrants in western nations adapting to the linguistic environment in which they are immersed, where they are required to achieve a certain level of proficiency in a new tongue that will allow for more seamless social integration. Kenji Hakuta writes that the goal of the American education is to make all descendants of immigrants functional bilinguals.⁴²

It is helpful to apply this terminology retroactively to the Judean community in exile in ancient Babylonia. Individuals found themselves suddenly transplanted into a new linguistic domain following their exile from their homeland. Their ability to adapt to these circumstances was dependent upon mastery of the dominant language. Exile and immigration have implications for language use and acquisition; the inevitable consequence of both phenomena is the immersion of individuals in an unfamiliar environment, the transition into which is greatly facilitated by a swift linguistic transition. It would be justified, therefore, to posit that Daniel and his comrades are portrayed as functional bilinguals. One must note they are *portrayed* to be so, as they are first and foremost literary figures, and their historicity remains up for debate. In any

⁴¹ Frederic W. Field, *Key Concepts in Bilingualism*, (UK: Palgrave Macmillian, 2011), 75.

Frederic Field writes, “Functional literacy identifies the kind of skills an individual needs just to function satisfactorily within a society. It includes the ability to decode print...they need to be able to read the bills...it also implies a degree of numeracy.”

⁴² Kenji Hakuta, *Mirror of Language: The Debate on Bilingualism*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1986), 229-230, “The goals of the educational system could be seen as the development of all students as functional bilinguals, including monolingual English- speakers. The motive is linguistic, cognitive, and cultural enrichment.”

case, whether they actually existed or not, they are depicted in the Book of Daniel to be bilingual.

Although the deportees to Babylon may have lacked previous exposure to the Aramaic language, a changing reality necessitated its rapid acquisition in order to gain social acceptance and to overcome the adversity ensuing the deportation. Functional bilingualism would have constituted the most logical and facile solution to the needs of the deportees in a foreign kingdom. Functional bilingualism is highly contextual and relies on the examination of how language is used in all aspects of an individual's quotidian activities and daily existence: "It concerns when, where, and with whom people use their two languages."⁴³ This is a crucial characteristic of functional bilingualism, as part of the adaptation process requires an individual to distinguish between occasions where it is suitable or necessary to employ one language over the other. An individual must therefore be aware of the context in order to assess and determine language use. Cognitive studies in applied linguistics have found that in general, bilingual children have higher levels of metalinguistic awareness than their monolingual counterparts.⁴⁴ Functional bilingualism is thereby intertwined with linguistic consciousness; the two are mutually dependent. Speakers observe their surroundings before deciding on the most appropriate language for the situation. The process is highly complex and requires a constant consciousness with regards to the multifaceted elements present in each distinct event.

⁴³ Colin Baker, *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, (Multilingual Matter, 2011), 5.

⁴⁴ James Cummins, "Bilingualism and the Development of Metalinguistic Awareness." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 9, no. 2 (1978): 131–149. C.f. also Bialystok, Ellen. "Levels of Bilingualism and Levels of Linguistic Awareness." *Developmental Psychology* 24, no. 4 (1988): 560. For more information on children as intermediaries and translators in bilingual situations, c.f. Marjorie Orellana, *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language and Culture*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

The linguistic situation within the book of Daniel is as follows: Daniel 1:1-2:4a are written in Hebrew, 2:4b-7:28 in Aramaic, and 8:1-12:13 resume in Hebrew. Based on this bilingual structure, one may argue that the book of Daniel is constructed and organized from the perspective of a functional bilingual, an individual with adequate proficiency in both Hebrew and Aramaic who is acutely conscious of the proper settings for the use of each respective language. Just as bilingual interlocutors rely on situational cues to make an informed decision regarding language choice, the author of the book of Daniel demarcated the context between Hebrew and Aramaic use. Certain domains were considered to be Hebrew-oriented, while others required the use of Aramaic. In sociolinguistics, the varied settings in which speakers operate and draw cues to determine language choice is known as *social context*.⁴⁵ Sociologist Erving Goffman emphasized the import of paying attention to the context in which language is uttered and spoken. The data and input a speaker receives from his or her surroundings has an unequivocal impact on the way he or she chooses to formulate language and articulate ideas: “For increasingly there is work on a particularly subversive type of social correlate of speech that is called ‘situational.’”⁴⁶ Language is fluid and malleable, and individuals choose to wield it differently, depending on a variety of factors: their current situation, their audience, and even body language. The amalgamation of all these seemingly insignificant components results in a speaker making a conscious decision regarding his or her manner of speaking and comport. While Goffman’s work concentrated solely on interactions within a monolingual realm, the

⁴⁵ *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, edited by Rajend Mesthrie.

⁴⁶ Erving Goffman, “The Neglected Situation.” *American Anthropologist* 66, no. 6 (1964): 134. On the importance of context for language, see. Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin, *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), where a distinction is made between “language in context” and “language as context.”

elements to which he alluded are relevant to understanding bilingual situations as well.

Individuals are influenced by their immediate environment, which provides them with the needed information to select one language or means of communication over another.

In addition, yet another important influencing factor in determining language use is the *context of culture* – that is, interlocutors not only observe the immediate situation but also look at cultural cues. This reveals the heightened level of awareness embedded in any communicative interaction. As Rajend Mesthrie observes, “Cultural knowledge is in part a knowledge about particular social situations, because we all have a generalized awareness of what can be legitimately or unexceptionally be said by whom, to whom, when, and so on.”⁴⁷ Speakers have an inherent amount of control over how language is used, and they can navigate it artfully and strategically to best suit the needs of each unique situation. The context of culture refers to the range of available possibilities, and a speaker makes a selection from an existing set of options in order to expedite his communicative purpose.⁴⁸

Language choice is a cognitively and culturally active process, requiring speakers to quickly process received input regarding the situation, culture, and their audience. Language choice, therefore, is inextricably intertwined with linguistic consciousness. Contrary to popular perception, speakers are not negligent and disorganized, oscillating aimlessly from one language to another. Transitioning to another language is the result of understanding and processing all available social, contextual, and cultural cues. A functional bilingual must not only possess the

⁴⁷ Rajend Mesthrie, *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), section 9.2.

⁴⁸ M.A.K. Halliday, “Language in a Social Perspective,” *Educational Review* 23, no. 3, (1971): 165-188.

necessary skillset in two languages but must also pay close attention to the conventions and social norms that dictate their use.

The bilingual nature of the book of Daniel, therefore, is the result of a conscious decision made on the part of the redactors and testifies to their awareness regarding the situational and cultural conventions for language use. In fact, by interweaving both Hebrew and Aramaic into one coherent narrative, the authors attempt to portray the experience of a functional bilingual in exile, simulating situations where different languages would be required. The authors contrived the text to be representative of the variety of scenarios an interlocutor would encounter. Within the narrative, Daniel operates within two disparate contexts – the privacy of his abode and the regal court. These two are vastly different spheres of existence, and for an individual to comfortably navigate both domains would require proficiency in two languages. Properly understanding the “social context,” a speaker would make the transition and alter his or her communicative style and idiom. Such was the case with the exiled deportees from Judah, who adapted to their new surroundings and quickly learned to demarcate situations. Because bilinguals are heavily reliant on contextual cues that vary from situation to situation, the text delineates the change in settings that necessitate a linguistic shift. Biblical scholars have also given greater attention to the context in which language change occurs. Anatheia E. Portier-Young writes: “[This approach] focuses on the domain, association, and function of the two languages.”⁴⁹ Applying terminology from the field of sociolinguistics, one might contend that the use of language in the book of Daniel is dictated by the *social context* and *context of culture*, the same elements responsible for determining code-switching in bilingual individuals. These factors impact the ways individuals communicate – in one language or in multiple ones. Likewise,

⁴⁹ Anatheia E. Portier-Young, “Languages of Identity and Obligation,” 102.

although these conditions have usually been addressed with regards to oral communication, one can extrapolate and apply them to the context of literary production. Authors must have been keenly aware of the variety of social situations requiring language choice decisions.

Social Settings Requiring Language Shifts in Daniel

In the book of Daniel, authors attempt to show the variety of social settings that the exiles of the time would have encountered, that in turn would have necessitated a language shift. The text presents a coherent narrative that is meant to simulate a series of authentic situations requiring code-switching. Daniel Snell argues that interlacing Aramaic portions into the text is meant to “give a sense of authenticity to the documents and stories by presenting them in the language in which they are likely first to have been composed.”⁵⁰ This element of authenticity is crucial for our understanding of the intentions of the authors. They meticulously crafted a narrative that would accurately depict real-life scenarios involving language alternation.

While Snell’s argument of authenticity has been criticized as an inadequate explanation for the presence of Aramaic in the text,⁵¹ it supports the claim of linguistic consciousness on the part of Biblical redactors. The authors were aware of the complex linguistic practices within the Babylonian Judean exilic community and how the use of multiple languages had become an adaptation mechanism. The story of Daniel is set in this time period ⁵² (regardless of the book’s

⁵⁰ Daniel Snell, “Why Is There Aramaic in the Bible?” *JSOT* 18 (1980): 32-51.

⁵¹ Bill T. Arnold, “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible. Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel”, *JNSL* 22 (1996): 9. Arnold writes, “Snell’s explanation for the presence of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible is not entirely incorrect. But we would contend that the authors were not merely using Aramaic to buttress the believability of their narratives.”

⁵² Indeed, the factors at play in the Babylonian/Persian periods continued into the Hellenistic and Hasmonean Periods. Hence, the dating of Daniel is important in this respect.

actual date of composition, which remains highly polemical in biblical scholarship).⁵³ The writers hoped to delineate and reconstruct the language dynamics as accurately as possible. Therefore, verbal interactions which would have likely been conducted in Aramaic are written in the supposed “original language.” One such example would be the conversation between the king and his magicians in the second chapter of the book. The text begins with Hebrew but then transitions to Aramaic in an attempt to authentically replicate official discourse as it would have taken place.

וַיְדַבְּרוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים לְמֶלֶךְ, אַרְמִית: מֶלֶךְא לְעֶלְמִיּוֹ חַיִּי--אָמַר חֵלְמָא לְעַבְדֶּיךָ (לְעַבְדֶּיךָ) וּפְשָׂרָא נְסוּא – דְּנִיּאַל ב, ד

Then spoke the Chaldeans to the king in Aramaic: 'O king, live forever! Tell thy servants the dream, and we will declare the interpretation. – Daniel 2:5

The introduction of a new social setting – the royal palace – is coupled with the change in language not only to lend credibility to the narrative but to confer an accurate representation of the linguistic environment. Aramaic was the established lingua franca of the time, and the king would certainly not have conversed in the idiom of the Judean exiles. As such, the authors wrote in Aramaic in order to properly represent the monarch and the content of his communications.

Explicit evidence of linguistic consciousness can be found in the opening of the verse, which unequivocally announces the shift to Aramaic. In fact, as Jan-Wim Wesseliuss points out,

⁵³ S.R. Driver argues for a second-century dating for the book of Daniel based on the nature of the Aramaic. See S.R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1905), xlvii-lxxvi. However, K.A. Kitchen proposes an earlier dating, observing that there are a number of Aramaic words in Daniel that can be attributed to Akkadian influence, thereby suggesting the possibility of a dating to the fifth or sixth B.C.E. See K.A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), 31-79.

in both of Ezra and Daniel, the mention of speaking “in Aramaic” (ארמית) introduces not a single speech or document but rather a protracted block of text,⁵⁴ and it is after this critical juncture that Aramaic quickly becomes the dominant language of the text. In the case of Daniel, the linguistic shift was also paralleled by a change in location – to the court of the king. The authors were aware of the social settings requiring the use of Aramaic, but they also wished to convey this information to their audience. Thus, they made a concerted effort to bring attention to this switch in order to draw their readers’ attention to the underlying circumstances of language change: the social situation and cultural context. These are the key influencing elements responsible for causing language switching in bilinguals, and the authors of the text are governed by the same rules of context in order to present as authentic and linguistically accurate a narrative as possible. Aramaic is not arbitrarily used within the book of Daniel, but rather it functions to underscore the situational changes that drive language shifts. The insertion of Aramaic is preceded by the move to a new environment and the introduction of characters who would have likely used Aramaic as their primary language. The languages used within the text “mirror contexts and evoke particular associations.”⁵⁵ The attempt of “context mirroring” – regardless of actual authenticity – is the greatest evidence for imposed linguistic awareness. The story of Daniel is not merely a recounting of the events that transpired during the Babylonian exile; it is the depiction of the language politics and subsequent bilingualism that left an indelible mark on the linguistic profile of the work’s audience.

⁵⁴ Jan-Wim Wesselius, "The Literary Nature of the Book of Daniel and the Linguistic Character of its Aramaic." *Aramaic Studies* 3 (2005): 252.

⁵⁵ Anatheia E. Portier-Young, “Languages of Identity and Obligation,” 103.

Not only did the authors of the text portray the situations in which language change is necessitated, but they also delineated the conditions that resulted in the promotion and widespread use of Aramaic across the Empire and how the Judean speech community was affected by the vicissitudes of the linguistic landscape of the time. In the first chapter of the book, Daniel and his comrades are deported to Babylon and are given rigorous re-education in the “language and literature” of the Chaldeans (סִפְר וּלְשׁוֹן כְּשָׂדִים). In the subsequent chapter, the shift to Aramaic takes place, mirroring the language shift that the exilic Judean community was coerced to undergo. Therefore, the code-switching found within the text is a representation of the greater phenomenon of language competition and linguistic shift that are taking place. Otto Plöger discusses the symbolism of the switch to Aramaic:

In der Inhaltsübersicht ist schon kurz angedeutet worden, daß der Übergang in die aramäische Sprache in 2,4b dort vorgenommen worden ist, wo die Weisen Babylons in deren Weisheit Daniel mit seinen Freunden unterrichten worden ist, vor dem König das Wort ergreifen. Das Aramäische symbolisiert also die fremde Sprache, die Daniel hat erlernen müssen...⁵⁶

From the overview of the content, it has been indicated shortly beforehand that the transition into the Aramaic language in 2:4b takes place, where the wise men of Babylon, in whose wisdom Daniel and his friends are educated, are granted permission to speak before the king. Therefore, Aramaic symbolizes the foreign language that Daniel had to learn.

The symbolic value of Aramaic is paramount for our understanding of authorial intentions. By embedding a protracted block of Aramaic into a Hebrew text, the authors create an artificial linguistic disjunction, perhaps confusing the audience. In a way, this is a symbolic re-enactment of the disruption and discontinuity of Hebrew during the exilic period, as it was relegated to a

⁵⁶ Otto Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1965), 27.

language of secondary importance due to state-sponsored initiatives to promote Aramaic. Furthermore, this scene and the transition to Aramaic are crafted in a way to evoke a similar sense of disorientation and perplexity in the audience that the exiles would have experienced, as they underwent Aramaic re-education. As Plöger notes:

Die andere Sprache, die er zum ersten Male gebrauchte, als er die Chaldäer zu reden beginnen läßt, betrachtet er als eine Metapher für die *fremde* Sprache, in der Daniel mit seinen Freunden gemäß Kapite 1 unterrichtet worden ist.⁵⁷

The other language, which he uses for the first time, as he begins to speak with the Chaldeans, he considers to be a metaphor for the foreign language, in which Daniel and his friends were educated according to Chapter 1.

Plöger emphasizes the connection between the introduction of Aramaic in Daniel 2:4 with the process of systematic re-education of young deportees in the Chaldean language in the previous chapter.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַשְׁפֶּנֶז רֹבֵעַ סָרִיסִי: לְהָבִיא מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִזֶּרַע הַמְּלוּכָה--וּמִן-הַפְּרִתִּים. לְדִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין-בָּהֶם כָּל-מֵאוּם וְטוֹבֵי מְרָאָה וּמְשֻׁפְּלִים בְּכָל-חֵכְמָה, וְיָדְעֵי דַעַת וּמְבִינֵי מַדְעָה, וְאֲשֶׁר כָּח בָּהֶם, לְעִמּוֹד בְּהִיכַל הַמֶּלֶךְ; וְלִלְמַדְם סִפְרָה, וּלְשׁוֹן כַּשְׁדִּים. – דְּנֵאִיל 1:4

And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz his chief officer that he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, and of the seed royal, and of the nobles, youths in whom was no blemish, but fair to look on, and skillful in all wisdom, and skillful in knowledge, and discerning in thought, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. – Daniel 1:4

Plöger is operating under the assumption that the tongue of the Chaldeans (לשון כשדים), which Daniel and the young deportees were taught, is the same language as that spoken by the king and his officials in the royal court. Therefore, the authorial decision to integrate Aramaic for the first time into the Hebrew narrative seems to indicate a deliberate attempt to evoke a specific response in the readership. Aramaic is meant to be perceived as a foreign language, one which

⁵⁷ Ibid., 49

was thrust upon the Judean speech community. Moreover, the writers hoped to underscore the connection between the first and second chapters. The compulsory language training of chapter one leads nicely to the Aramaic dominance in the text beginning in chapter two. In addition, chapter two is set up in stark linguistic contrast to chapter one. The introduction of the Chaldean officials serves as a suitable context for changing the language of the narrative. Although Daniel had previously interacted with members of regal society in chapter one, the main narrative remained in Hebrew, presumably as the emphasis was on the experiences of the Judean protagonists. Nonetheless, the explicit mention of the Chaldeans is accompanied by a language shift. Not only does this provide authenticity to the account, as the interactions with Chaldeans are documented in the original idiom, but also reveals an awareness of the intrinsic link between ethnicity and language. By thrusting Aramaic into the text, the redactor seeks to crystallize the idea of Aramaic being the language of foreign imposition and coercion. Furthermore, it is the language of the inhospitable setting in which they have found themselves. Because of the linguistic awareness of the authors, the audience is fully cognizant of the coercive role of Aramaic at the time. In essence, the alternation between languages underscores the disruptive force of Aramaic on the dynamics of the Judean speech community in exile.

Societal Bilingualism in the Book of Daniel

Societal bilingualism (also known as “social bilingualism”) is the phenomenon of competency in two languages at the social level. When discussing bilingualism, there is a tendency to speak of an individual’s ability to perform tasks and operate in more than one language. This is known as *individual bilingualism*. However, the concept of societal bilingualism differs in that it entails non-language related factors and their role in influencing

and determining language change.⁵⁸ Acknowledging the existence and influence of non-linguistic elements in the phenomenon of bilingualism is paramount for better understanding the complexities of the use of language in society. Language use is governed and dictated by a vast set of cultural norms, social conventions, and historical traditions. Societal bilingualism encapsulates the cumulative effect and combined influence of all these driving forces in their totality. Hugo Beardsmore writes, “In societal bilingualism, the investigator is placing the accent primarily on understanding what linguistic forces are present in the community, their inter-relationships, the degree of connection between political, economic, social, educative and cultural forces of language.”⁵⁹ It is the amalgamation and intersection of numerous factors that forms the backdrop for the bilingual condition. Bilingualism does not exist in a vacuum; the use of multiple languages emerges as a response to the collective power of sundry external forces. It is therefore important to view the use of both Aramaic and Hebrew within the book of Daniel as the product of societal bilingualism, not of the individual. The authors of the text operated within a specific cultural context and in a particular historical period. By framing the book of Daniel in a temporal and historical chronology, one can better derive an understanding of the forces in the background responsible for establishing bilingualism as the new norm for the Judean speech community.

The emergence and crystallization of societal bilingualism often occur as a reaction to a disturbance in the political and social status quo for a group of individuals. Mark Sebba identifies the movement of people and populations as a driving force for the development and

⁵⁸ Tej K. Bhatia, “Bilingualism and Multilingualism from a Socio-Psychological Perspective.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (2017).

⁵⁹ Hugo Baeten Beardsmore, *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1986), 4.

intensification of societal bilingualism as a visible phenomenon.⁶⁰ While the mass influx of individuals from one polity to another occurs for various reasons, the ensuing result is almost invariably the same. Individuals bring with them their linguistic and cultural practices, coming into direct confrontation with the established linguistic norms of their new residence. Sebba cites the mass emigration of Poles to the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 21st century as a contemporary example of societal bilingualism.⁶¹ The absorption of hundreds of thousands of Polish nationals resulted in the popularization and increased visibility of Polish as a minority language in the United Kingdom. In turn, the emergence of a bilingual Polish-English speech community impacted the existing linguistic equilibrium of the country. The linguistic dynamic of a locality is easily liable to alteration and shift with the sudden incorporation of large groups of individuals, but these forces are constantly in flux. Sebba writes, “[In Britain], there is a constant changing constellation of minority groups with different linguistic repertoires and needs, which impact in various ways the existing balance of languages within a multilingual state.”⁶² In the case of the Persian Period, the mass deportation of Judeans from their homeland resulted not only in the displacement of individuals but also disrupted the linguistic status quo.

Additive Bilingualism in the Book of Daniel

Nonetheless, societal bilingualism and the adoption of a second language do not necessarily connote a full assimilation into the affiliated culture. As Sebba observes, “Bilinguals,

⁶⁰ Sebba, Mark, “Societal Bilingualism,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Ruth Wodak (Sage Publications: London, 2011), 448.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 447-448.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 448.

especially those in an additive context, do not seem to be torn between two cultures associated with their respective languages.”⁶³ While language has often been an influencing factor in the formation of identity, it is not invariably so. This is important to note as we extrapolate the research to better understand the dynamic of the exilic Judean community in Babylon after the deportation. Although Judeans became linguistically assimilated, adopting Aramaic as their second language, this does not mean that they immediately repudiated their cultural values and religious beliefs, due to them adjusting their linguistic profile in order to adapt to their new surroundings. This was illustrated in the first chapter of Daniel, where he refuses to consume the victuals of the king in order to adhere to the cultural practices of his native land.

וַיִּשֶׁם דָּנִיֵּאל עַל-לְבוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִתְגַּאֵל בְּפֶת-בַּג הַמֶּלֶךְ וּבַיַּיִן מִשְׁתֵּיו

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's food, nor with the wine which he drank – Daniel 1:8

This attests to the cultural consciousness of the character. The text serves as a representation and as an implicit lesson. It shows that in spite of societal bilingualism, members of a newly bilingual community can still choose to retain the cultural norms that they had acquired in their upbringing. This is because bilingualism here occurred in an *additive context*, defined by Wallace Lambert as a situation when a person “adds a second, social relevant language to his/her repertory of skills.”⁶⁴ The acquisition of Aramaic for Daniel constitutes an instance of additive bilingualism, as he underwent rigorous education in the language in order to be able to function and prosper in Babylonian society. In the case of additive bilingualism, an individual is not in

⁶³ Rene Appel and Peter Muysken, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 93.

⁶⁴ W.E. Lambert, “Some Cognitive and Sociocultural Consequences of Being Bilingual.” *Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics*. (Washington D.C, 1978), 217.

peril of losing his or her native tongue⁶⁵ and the associated culture is also retained. Therefore, for Daniel and his friends, Aramaic would not be in a position to displace and supplant their native Hebrew, nor would the customs of their Babylonian counterparts be able to erode their traditions and core beliefs.

In fact, the narrative of Daniel in many ways is a presentation of cultural and linguistic resistance at a time of coerced assimilation and homogenization, for the book paints a group of culturally autonomous individuals. These can be seen in chapter 1 when Daniel and his comrades decline to partake in the eating rituals of the king. Further portrayals of cultural autonomy include the refusal to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's erected status in chapter 4 as well as Daniel's insistence on maintaining his prayer regiment in chapter 6. They superficially adopt a new language and set of traditions in order to survive in a hostile environment, yet they obstinately cling on to their faith, risking persecution and castigation. The linguistic juxtaposition of Hebrew with Aramaic corresponds to the struggle to achieve cultural equilibrium at a time of great social tumult and political upheaval. The language shifts are part of the greater struggle of the Judean exiles to maintain their customs and way of life at a time of intense cultural and linguistic dissonance.

Purposes of Using Hebrew in the Book of Daniel

While we have discussed the use of Aramaic within the book of the Daniel, the Hebrew portions were also embedded strategically and thus reveal authorial literary intentions. The literary setting of the book of Daniel takes place at a time when Aramaic enjoyed nearly

⁶⁵ Appel, Rene, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, 102.

unchallenged linguistic hegemony; in a way, it is hardly surprising that the language penetrated the text, given its ubiquitous presence and universal utility in the regions of the Empire.

However, Hebrew represented a minority tongue, a language spoken by a meager segment of the population with limited political sway and social advantage. Furthermore, state-sponsored Aramaic promotion and re-education policies led to the function of Hebrew becoming extremely restricted in scope. However, in spite of the shift in focus to Aramaic, Hebrew continued to retain intrinsic value as a language of the exiles from Judah, and its use in the initiating chapter of the book signals an attempt to address their audience in a language which is sentimentally significant. According to Arnaud Sérandour, Hebrew was a local idiom affiliated with sanctity and sacredness.⁶⁶ Sérandour is correct in his observation, as the Hebrew portions of Daniel emphasize the importance of maintaining holiness and piety, such as Daniel 1:8, which documents the protagonist's determination to avoid engaging in ceremonially unclean practices.

In Daniel 1:8, the exiles from Judah refuse to adopt cultural practices that contradict the precepts of ritual purity found in the Law of Moses. Upholding the laws of dietary purity was an important expression of religious fealty, as eating impure victuals was tantamount to the recognition of a pagan deity.⁶⁷ The use of Hebrew in the text aligns with the content of the narrative. Hebrew words like יתגאל ("to defile oneself") remind readers of the perils of conforming and compromising one's religious values. Hebrew was chosen by authors to document this incident because it reinforces the affinity between language, ceremonial cleanliness, and religious sanctity.

⁶⁶ Arnaud Sérandour, "Hebreu et Araméen dans la Bible." *REJ* 159 (2000): 345-355.

⁶⁷ S.R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 8.

Moreover, the underlying connotations behind the use of Hebrew are significant for a better understanding of its purpose within the text. The use of Hebrew as the first language of the book in order advances a specific agenda to a narrow audience, one which presumably was comprised of functional bilinguals, capable of communicating in both languages. Similar approaches which take into account the intent within the composition of Daniel include Hedwige Rouillard-Bonraisin's literary examination of the text, in which she contends that Hebrew represents a sort of secret language for the Judean people. Hebrew, understood by a small religious minority in the Babylonian Empire, stands in stark contrast with Aramaic, which was universally understood by all.⁶⁸ In essence, writing in Hebrew imbues a sense of exclusivity to the text, as it was used only by a narrow sector of the Babylonian population – the Judean minority. Hebrew's functional utility was largely restricted to the context of religion and culture. The text was not intended to be accessible to a broad audience. Its intended readership was the literate bilingual Babylonian Jewry. The readers would have been inured to the existence of multiple languages and well-versed in the art of language shift as a response to situational changes.

The authors of Daniel specially tailored the language of the text to suit a specific kind of audience. Shifting from Hebrew to Aramaic was not merely the result of a lapse in awareness on the part of the authors; on the contrary, this linguistic transition evinces their full cognizant investment in the constructing of the narrative. David Valeta writes that “the change of languages...is intentional and part of the rhetorical strategy of the book rather than an accident of

⁶⁸ Hedwige Rouillard-Bonraisin, “Problèmes du bilinguisme en Daniel”, in *Mosaïque de langues, mosaïque culturelle. Le bilinguisme dans le Proche-Orient ancien*, ed. Briquel-Chatonnet (Paris, 1996), 162.

translation or redaction process.”⁶⁹ The narrative begins in Hebrew, and this may have been a way to draw the attention of functionally bilingual Judean literates. The presence of Hebrew evokes associations with sacredness, holiness, and adherence to the tenets of faith, all of which are explicitly reinforced by the content of the text. This corresponds to Mikhail Bakhtin’s argument that different languages introduce different perspectives in his classic work “Discourse in the Novel.”⁷⁰

It is within the first chapter of the book that Daniel persists and upholds the precepts of the Torah in spite of external pressure to succumb. The Hebrew introduction conveys a linguistic-cultural resilience and continuity. On the linguistic level, Hebrew remains in use, even in the reality of Aramaic rapidly gaining ground as the dominant lingua franca. The authors give the audience reassurance that Hebrew has not been displaced or superseded. This marks a collective response on the part of the Judean exiles, where the production and dissemination of Hebrew literature became a visible response to inflicted cultural erasure. The purposeful creation of a Hebraic literary corpus serves as an expression of resistance and “has become vital to Jewish identity and survival.”⁷¹ In other words, writing in Hebrew was an act of linguistic resistance in and of itself. This linguistic resistance was also paralleled by the narrative of cultural distinctiveness promulgated by the authors. Language is used strategically by authors to reinforce the cultural messages embedded in the content of the book. Daniel represents the exemplar of an individual who achieves prosperity in a foreign society without eschewing his

⁶⁹ David Valeta, “Polyglossia and Parody: Language in Daniel 1-6,” in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 92.

⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julia Rivkin and Michael Ryan, (Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 205-216.

⁷¹ David Aberbach, *Revolutionary Hebrew, Empire, and Crisis: Four Peaks in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Survival* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 3

cultural values. The authors hope to galvanize their readers to aspire to be culturally and linguistically autonomous in spite of the political state of affairs.

Bill Arnold refers to the use of different languages as creating multiple perspectives within the text.⁷² His argument seems tenable in light of the evidence for the linguistic-cultural connection present in the book. The writers of Daniel situate the book strategically in the exilic community, and Hebrew is used as the primary language of communication. The writing of the first chapter in Hebrew, therefore, not only gives authenticity to the account but frames the narrative from the perspective of the deportees. Bill T. Arnold writes: “The author is writing as a Jew with an interest in the religious significance of events surrounding the four young Hebrews, as they unfold in Babylon.”⁷³ The point of view is set, and the choice of language alone reveals to the audience the central locus of the narrative. Already from the use of Hebrew in the beginning, it is immediately apparent that the work deals with the affairs of the Judean community. Ideology is also conveyed through the decision to write in Hebrew, and according to Arnold the author remains consistent in the ideological plane he sets up.⁷⁴ Valeta agrees with this assessment, writing that “the chapter’s ideological point of view is clearly oriented toward Daniel and his friends.”⁷⁵ The ideological predilections of the authors are made manifest first and foremost through language; they are subsequently corroborated by the internal consistency of the narrative and the emphasis on the retention of religion and preservation of culture.

⁷² Bill T. Arnold, “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible. Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel”, *JNSL* 22 (1996): 1-16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁵ David Valeta, “Polyglossia and Parody: Language in Daniel 1-6,” 93.

Some scholars argue that the work of Daniel constitutes “resistance literature,”⁷⁶ where the preservation of Judean culture in times of social tumult is applauded. The clashes in culture characterize the most noteworthy events of the book, where the protagonists are forced to decide between open denunciation of their beliefs and political punishment. In fact, scholars often compare the portrayal of Daniel to the Joseph narrative in Genesis, claiming a common theme of cultural dissonance and the struggle to maintain one’s identity in a foreign land.⁷⁷ The thematic resemblance between Daniel and Joseph is significant; both individuals experience challenges and are torn between two disparate cultures and ways of life. Furthermore, just as Daniel learned to speak Aramaic in Babylonian captivity, Joseph also adopted the Egyptian language as his primary means of communication, speaking to his brothers in Genesis 42:23 via an interpreter (מַלְאָךְ). Both Daniel and Joseph became bilinguals in an additive context, as they needed to learn a second language in order to achieve success in a new environment.

It is quite possible that redactors deliberately constructed Daniel to be reminiscent of Joseph, a man who is commended in Genesis for his commitment to his faith despite difficult circumstances. As such, one can understand why Hebrew was chosen to be the first language of the book. The authors wish to set up a tale of a commendable Judean protagonist, and the work was intended to be read by a Judean audience. Hebrew preserves a critical link to religion at a time when the Judean exiles were threatened with mass assimilation. The blatant use of Hebrew – in spite of the dominance of Aramaic – is the first and most obvious sign of the deliberate endeavor to preserve one’s cultural and religious identity during the exile; moreover, it indicates

⁷⁶ D.L Smith-Christopher, “The Book of Daniel.” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L. Keck, Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 7.19-152.

⁷⁷ Jan-Wim Wesseliuss, “The Writing of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol.2, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, (Brill: Leiden, 2001), 308

that the book of Daniel was written in response to an acute awareness of the complex cultural and linguistic dynamics of the time.

The Association of Aramaic with Foreignness:

The transition to Aramaic within the book of Daniel coincides with the introduction of the Chaldean officials and their interaction with the Babylonian potentate. This is marked by an explicit announcement of the impending linguistic transition in order to accentuate the interruption to the coherence of the text up to this point as well as to strengthen the affiliation of Aramaic with foreignness. In the book of Daniel, the language is unequivocally portrayed as an outsider language that does not belong to the Judean community. The enforced Aramaic language education mentioned in the first chapter is closely tied to the subsequent mention of non-kosher food and Babylonian religious practices. The direct use of Aramaic in the narrative contributes to substantiating the link between the language and foreignness in the minds of the readers. Non-Judean entities and elements are often portrayed in a negative light, while the redactor commends acts and behaviors that stem from adherence to Judean laws and practices. The text is overwhelmingly partial to the Judean protagonists, depicting them as highly devout and competent individuals who have successfully maintained an equilibrium in exile, prospering under the rule of foreigners, while simultaneously not compromising their faith or values. In contrast, the text is overtly reprehensive of the foreign rulers. As Collins writes, “The portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and even that of Darius, are by no means flattering to the Gentile kings. They are presented as arrogant buffoons, even if they sometimes come to their

senses.”⁷⁸ The use of Aramaic, therefore, strategically used by the redactors of the book of Daniel, is to reinforce this negative image of the Babylonian and Persian kings. Aramaic not only provides authenticity to the account but also accentuates the foreignness of these individuals. The authors have deliberately created the association of foreignness with a host of less amiable qualities: depravity, immorality, and lack of sense. Aramaic is the tongue of these individuals whom the text criticizes. Put otherwise, language choice underscores the opposition between Jewish and Gentile as upright and deprave respectively.

The Association Between Foreign Nations and Languages

Another example of language consciousness found in Daniel is the close link between nation and language. Writers wished to consolidate the connection between the two in the minds of the readers. The Biblical Aramaic word “nations” (אַמְיָא) may connote linguistic differences. This lexical item occurs six times in Daniel and always appears as a fixed part of the expression אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁוֹנָא עַמְמִיָּא (‘‘peoples, nations, and languages’’).⁷⁹ The table below shows the appearance of this typical phrase within the book of Daniel:

Table 1: Appearance of the Phrase ‘‘Peoples, Nations, and Languages’’ in Daniel

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>And the herald cried aloud: 'To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages – <i>Daniel 3:4</i></p> | <p>וְכִרְוֹאָא קְרָא בְּהִילָּ: לְכוּן אַמְרִין עַמְמִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁוֹנָא</p> |
|--|---|

⁷⁸ John J. Collins, *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, Brill: Leiden, 2001, 11.

⁷⁹ Vogt Ernst. *A Lexicon of Biblical Aramaic: Clarified by Ancient Documents*. (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 38

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>All the peoples, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. – <i>Daniel 3:7b</i></p> | <p>נפלין כָּל-עַמֵּי מִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁנֵיָא, סְגִדִין לְצַלְמֵם דְּהַבָּא דִּי הָקִים, נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶכָא</p> |
| <p>Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; peace be multiplied unto you. – <i>Daniel 3:31</i></p> | <p>נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶכָא לְכָל עַמֵּי מִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁנֵיָא דִּי-דַארִין (דְּיָרִין) בְּכָל-אַרְעָא שְׁלַמְכוּן יִשְׁגָּא.</p> |
| <p>and because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him – <i>Daniel 5:19a</i></p> | <p>וּמִן-רְבוּתָא דִּי יְהֵב לֵה כָּל עַמֵּי מִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁנֵיָא הָוּ זַאעִין (זַיְעִין) וְדַחֲלוּ מִן-קְדָמוּהִי</p> |
| <p>Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: 'Peace be multiplied unto you. – <i>Daniel 6:26</i></p> | <p>בְּאִדִּין דְּרִינִישׁ מֶלֶכָא כְּתַב לְכָל עַמֵּי מִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁנֵיָא דִּי דַארִין (דְּיָרִין) בְּכָל אַרְעָא שְׁלַמְכוּן יִשְׁגָּא</p> |
| <p>And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him – <i>Daniel 7:14</i></p> | <p>וְלֵה יְהֵב שְׁלִטָּן, וְיָקָר וּמְלָכוּ וְכָל עַמֵּי מִיָּא אַמְיָא וְלִשְׁנֵיָא לֵה יִפְלָחוּן</p> |

In Daniel, the set expression כל עממיא אמיא ולשניא is always used in the context of dominion over an ethnically, politically, and linguistically diverse constituency. The phrase is quite superlative and in five out of the six occurrences it underscores the extent of Babylonian power and hegemony in the region and the vastness of their empire.⁸⁰ The occurrence of these elements together (“people,” “nation,” and “language”) also demonstrates that in Late Biblical literature,

⁸⁰ Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 109.

language becomes a key marker of the identity of different groups of people, as every nation has its own language.

Furthermore, the use of this expression within the Book of Daniel is reminiscent of the Table of Nations found in Genesis 10,⁸¹ where the descendants of Noah are also subdivided by families, languages, lands, and nations (מפשחה, לשון, ארץ, גוי); this is essentially an earlier Hebrew equivalent of the recurrent phrase in Daniel. Citing Genesis 10 is useful for understanding how this inherent connection between nationhood and language has long been engrained in the minds of Biblical authors, even before the Persian Period. The emergence of separate nations occurs simultaneously with the development of distinctive, independent languages.

Table 2: Appearance of the Phrase in Genesis 10

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Of these were the isles of the nations divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations. – Genesis 10:5</p> | <p>מֵאלֶּה נִפְרְדוּ אֵי גוֹיִם בְּאַרְצֹתָם אִישׁ לְלִשְׁנוֹ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם.</p> |
| <p>These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, in their nations. – Genesis 10:21</p> | <p>אֵלֶּה בְנֵי-חָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְלִשְׁנֹתָם בְּאַרְצֹתָם בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם</p> |
| <p>These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. – Genesis 10:31</p> | <p>אֵלֶּה בְנֵי שֵׁם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְלִשְׁנֹתָם, בְּאַרְצֹתָם, לְגוֹיֵיהֶם.</p> |

The offspring of Noah would diverge into separate nations, each inhabiting different lands and speaking different languages. The connection between land, ethnicity, and language is a

⁸¹ Ibid.,109-110.

recurrent theme in Biblical literature that can be seen in both Genesis 10 in Hebrew as well as the book of Daniel in Aramaic. Individuals are classified and set apart primarily based on where they live and which language they speak. Writers were clearly aware of the strong link between nationhood and mother tongue. The writers of Genesis and Daniel exhibited language consciousness, as they were cognizant of the intrinsic connection between language and nationality. Moreover, they viewed language as a defining feature in the formation of national identity, and they reinforced this message to their readers by reusing the same expression (עממיא אמיא לשניא in Aramaic, and ללשונתם בארצתם לגוייהם in Hebrew) throughout the text. The repeated use of this Aramaic phrase in Daniel is meant to consolidate the connection between foreign nations and languages and constitutes further evidence of the linguistic consciousness of authors.

Equal Use of Aramaic and Hebrew – Literary Value

As aforementioned, the Book of Daniel is unique in the biblical corpus for having an equal distribution of Hebrew and Aramaic portions. The balanced use of both languages within the same text may have greater text-critical value and literary function than traditionally understood. When taking into account authorial intent, one can rightfully suppose that the texts have been meticulously crafted and designed with forethought by the biblical authors. However, before proceeding further in the discussion, we must problematize the issue of authorial intent, which is a very difficult thing to accurately assess. W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley in their essay “Intentional Fallacy” identified five critical points that must be taken into consideration when attempting to elucidate the intentions of the authors. One of the issues they raise in their discussion is how a text is not always an infallible indicator of the author’s true intentions. They write the following:

One must ask how a critic expects to get an answer to the question about intention. How is he to find out what the poet tried to do? If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate evidence, and the critic must go outside the poem – for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in the poem.⁸²

When a writer succeeds in conveying his intended message, then the completed literary work is evidence enough in and of itself. However, Wimsatt and Beardsley are correct to point out that the finished product may represent an imperfect effort on the part of the writers – in which case, one must go beyond the literature in order to garner information regarding authorial intentionality. In the case of Daniel, while we cannot claim to be able to delineate the full range of the author's intentions, the source does appear to be self-aware of the switch between languages, as 2:4 demonstrates.

וַיְדַבְּרוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים לְמֶלֶךְ אַרְמִית: מַלְכָּא, לְעֻלְמִין חַיִּי--אָמַר סְלִמָּא לְעַבְדֵּיךְ (לְעַבְדֵּיךְ) וּפְשָׂרָא נְחֻמָּא.
Then spoke the Chaldeans to the king in Aramaic: O king, live forever! Tell thy servants the dream, and we will declare the interpretation. – Daniel 2:4

This above verse is significant because it marks a critical juncture in the literary redaction of Daniel. The verse begins in Hebrew but concludes in Aramaic (and marks the beginning of the Aramaic pericope). Authors explicitly announce the transition in order to draw reader attention to the linguistic switch and its exegetical significance. Based on the principle of authorial intentionality, it would appear that Daniel 2:4 is relatively successful in demonstrating the linguistic consciousness of the authors.

⁸² William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy." *The Sewanee Review* 54, no.3 (1946): 469.

Authors intended to shape the narrative so that it conveys a specific message to the audience, and they also wished for the format of the text to be compatible with the content. Authorial intentionality is a crucial factor in understanding the book of Daniel. Wesselius writes, “We are evidently dealing in the book of Daniel, as in the other cases of the linear composed dossier, with a conscious literary strategy.”⁸³ The use of language is planned and carefully implemented in order to achieve a particular literary goal.

As far as content is concerned, the book depicts a group of youths thrust into an intense cultural conflict; the book explores the arduous process of learning how to reconcile the requirements of the Jewish faith with the demands of a gentile society. Regardless of the authenticity of the accounts, the story of Daniel and his comrades in Babylon had a specific purpose and practical value – to address issues that were relevant and consequential for their intended audience. It is impossible to know with certainty for whom the book of Daniel was intended, although some scholars have made conjectures. For instance, Rainer Albertz believes that the prospective readership for the book of Daniel would have been the upper-class and elite Judeans during the Hellenic period.⁸⁴ One can only speculate that the text was meant for a particular audience, as one would need fluency in two languages in order to understand the narrative.

However, even though we do not know who the intended recipients were, one can contend the following: as the book was meant to be read and appreciated by a specific group of individuals, the underlying agenda has been refined and customized to suit their needs. From a

⁸³ Wesselius, “The Writing of Daniel,” 256.

⁸⁴ Rainer Albertz, “The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception, vol.1*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, Brill: Leiden, 2001, 182.

broad and cursory perusal, the book of Daniel is a success story of an individual who underwent significant tribulation. Nonetheless, the book more precisely tells of the trials of a Judean deportee who achieved prosperity under the regime of a foreign polity. Internal conflict and insecurity feature prominently throughout the narrative; trying situations require decisions, reflecting the uneasy balance between faith and political obedience. Furthermore, these events testify to the immense difficulty of placating both divine and worldly powers, as Plöger observes:

Damit scheinen einige theologische Themen, die dem Danielbuch vermutlich sehr wichtig waren...das Thema der Glaubensstreue in Kapitel 3 und das aufregende Thema der Beziehung zwischen dem Weltengott und der irdischen Weltmacht.⁸⁵

There are certain theological themes that were probably very important in the book of Daniel...the theme of religious fealty in Chapter 3 and the exciting topic of the relationship between God and earthly powers.

In essence, the two recurring themes that were of central importance to the authors (and presumably to their audience) were the retention of faith (“Glaubensstreue”) and the relationship between God and earthly power (“Beziehung zwischen dem Weltengott und der irdischen Weltmacht”). The text calls for a balance between obeying the laws of the land and adhering to the ordinances of religion, and this would have been particularly pertinent for the intended Judean audience. Albertz writes the following:

“The upper-class members are admonished to stay faithful to their Jewish beliefs and practices, even though this might provoke conflicts with their pagan environments, and are confirmed in their intention that belief in God is compatible with loyalty to gentile rulers.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Otto Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel*, 23.

⁸⁶ Rainer Albertz, “The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel, 182.

The Judeans are caught in a difficult bind, where they need to navigate a complex scenario of obeying the laws of the land as well as religious ordinances. The book of Daniel seeks to achieve equilibrium between the spiritual and the mundane, harmoniously reconciling both faith and civic responsibility. Daniel and his friends are exemplary individuals who managed to achieve this balance. The authors of the book are writing for a similar audience and would have identified with the characters,⁸⁷ as they struggled to reconcile the two sides. For the Judean audience of the time, the book of Daniel provides reassurance that it is indeed possible to retain one's religion while living under the dominion of foreign powers. Religion and political acceptance do not have to be mutually exclusive. This is the underlying message in the book of Daniel, a message which is reiterated within each chapter of the text, as the Judean deportees encounter new situations that challenge their faith. However, this message is also reinforced by the bilingual format of the book, and this may have been yet another reason for the use of two languages within the book of Daniel. The authors balanced the use of Hebrew (the sacred idiom of the Judean community) and Aramaic (the profane idiom of the Empire), conveying the importance of achieving equilibrium and navigating both the sacred and the profane. The content is backed up by the format; the bilingualism in Daniel underscores the plausibility of maintaining one's religion while being obedient to the laws of the land, even when the two may sometimes be in contradiction to one another.

⁸⁷ J.J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* 94 (1975), 218-234.

Historical Context of the Composition of Daniel

In order to more fully understand the import of language consciousness and the extent of authorial intentionality, it is critical to examine the historical context (likely, the Hasmonean Period) in which writing occurred and the intended audience to which the authors wished to address.⁸⁸ The composition of the book of Daniel likely took place at a time when the Judean community was faced with yet another crisis during the Hellenistic era, when Judean cultural and religious autonomy were being constantly challenged and undermined by ruthless Greek rulers. The external pressure exerted on the community to assimilate and eschew their beliefs and traditions was increasingly felt. The persecution of the Judeans at the hands of Antiochus constitutes the backdrop for the final redaction and release of the book of Daniel. D. Karl Martin writes:

Es lag in der Verfolgung, die Antiochus den Frommen bereitete, für viele die Versuchung nahe, vom Glauben abzufallen und an der Wahrheit der jüdischen Religion...zu verzweifeln.⁸⁹

As a result of the persecution that Antiochus inflicted on the pious, many were tempted to fall away from faith and to doubt the veracity of the Jewish religion.

The Judean community was facing an enormous challenge, and the situation was becoming precarious, as individuals began to lose faith and succumb to the attempts of cultural

⁸⁸ Christopher Wenning, *Das Buch Daniel: Historischer Hintergrund, Strukturanalyse und künstlerische Rezeption*, (GRIN Verlag, 2009), 15.

„Voraussetzung für ein Verständnis der möglichen Intentionen des Autors des Danielbuches ist die Zeit, in der er lebte, skizzieren zu können. Es war die Zeit jüdischer Freiheitskämpfer, die gegen die Dynastie der Seleukiden, zu denen auch Antiochos IV. zählt, kämpften.“

⁸⁹ D. Karl Marti, *Kurzer Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament: Abteilung XVIII Das Buch Daniel*. (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr. 1901), XV.

homogenization. The book of Daniel thus had a practical function: it needed to increase the morale of a dejected people during a time of political upheaval and insecurity. Furthermore, the book needed to spur the Judean readers to faithfulness and religious retention in spite of ongoing attempts to suppress their religion and tyrannize its followers.

The purpose of the book is clear. It was intended to reach an audience of people that had been victimized by the brutal regime of Antiochus, who tried to impose Greek culture and language on the Judean people. From perusing the text, readers were expected to derive strength and edification.

Der Zweck des Danielbuches ist deutlich genug, die Leser in der Notlage, die Antiochus Epiphanes durch sein Wüten dem Volke Israels verursacht hat, zu trösten und zu ermutern.⁹⁰

The purpose of the book of Daniel is adequately clear: to comfort and to encourage the readers, who underwent distress caused by the fury of Antiochus Epiphanes towards the people of Israel.

The book needed to confer consolation and encouragement to a despondent people devoid of a homeland and of the freedom to worship. All of this shows authorial intentionality. Writers had a specific agenda that had to be fulfilled when composing the work, and therefore every component of the text should be deemed a part of the critical apparatus needed to convey a particular message. Understanding the audience allows us to better analyze the literary elements of the work as crucial elements meant to service and fulfill the purpose of the authors. In a way, the book of Daniel is quite didactic; the stories were carefully constructed and designed to speak to a Judean audience in desperate need of edification and spiritual uplifting. The content was

⁹⁰ Harald Sahlin, *Antiochus IV. Epiphanes und Judas Mackabäus*, *Studia Theologica* 23, no.1 (1969), 41.

meant to elevate and glorify those who remained faithful,⁹¹ while simultaneously calling for cultural retention and preservation. The stories of the youths in the furnace as well as Daniel in the den of lions reinforce in the mind of the reader that God supports and rewards those who follow his precepts and do his will.⁹² The writing of these stories is a strong sign of authorial intervention in the text, where they take supposed historical events and manipulate them in a way that renders them both palatable and utilitarian to the intended audience. Daniel is considered by some scholars, in this vein, to be a fundamentally metahistorical interpretation (“grundsätzlich metahistorische Deutung”),⁹³ as the authors claim the use of a historical setting and environment to achieve their own underlying textual agenda.

Language Change and Shift in Tendenz: Aramaic as a Language of Power, Hebrew as a Language of Eschatology

A particularly interesting aspect of the textual criticism of Daniel involves the examination of the *tendenz*, or dominant literary point of view and objective. The literary *tendenz* is an important element that represents yet another manifestation of authorial intentionality in the composition and redaction of the Daniel text. Each language not only presents a new perspective but comes with its unique objectives and *Tendenz*. As the Book of Daniel is bilingual in nature, there are two different two *Tendenz* – one for the Aramaic section and one for the Hebrew section, and a shift between the two parallels the change in language choice. From initial

⁹¹ Marti, *Kurzer Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, XV.

⁹² Sahlin, *Antiochus IV*, 41.

⁹³ Ernst Haag *Die Neue Echter Bibel. Daniel*. (Würzburg 1993), 61. c.f. also, Christopher Wenning, *Das Buch Daniel: Historischer Hintergrund, Strukturanalyse und künstlerische Rezeption*.

scrutiny, one observes the following. The *Tendenz* of the Aramaic portion is to present “the realization of God’s kingdom against the mighty foreign empires of the world,”⁹⁴ while the *Tendenz* in the Hebrew half of the book appears to be more elusive.⁹⁵ In this section, we argue that there are two distinct types of *Tendenz* in Daniel, corresponding to the two different languages use. The *Tendenz* of the Aramaic portion centers around the theme of divine authority, while the Hebrew *Tendenz* centers around the theological and apocalyptic.

The identified shift in *Tendenz* between the Hebrew and Aramaic sections of Daniel corroborates the argument regarding the unique role and function of each language within the text. As mentioned previously, Aramaic is used in the text because it represents foreignness and serves as the language of society and politics; in contrast, Hebrew is used because it speaks directly to the Judean community and represents the religious and sacred. The shift in *Tendenz* works quite nicely when coupled with Bill Arnold’s argument that the change in language opens a new literary point of view.⁹⁶ As Aramaic is the language of the profane and mundane, it makes sense that the Aramaic *Tendenz* centers around the motifs of power, authority, and political continuity in contrast to the Hebrew *Tendenz*, which revolves around religion and faith. The Aramaic half of the book concentrates on the ultimate demise of worldly powers. Nebuchadnezzar’s two dreams in Daniel 2 and 4 show the eradication of formidable earthly forces at the hand of the divine. Subsequent, the Aramaic text demonstrates thematic unity in the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar’s fall from power in Daniel 4:28-31 and Belshazzar’s assassination

⁹⁴ Rainer Albertz, *The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel*, 175.

⁹⁵ Collins, J.J., “Daniel and His Social World,” *Interpretation* 39 (1985), 131-43.

⁹⁶ Bill T. Arnold, “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible. Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel”, *JNSL* 22 (1996), pp. 1-16

in 5:30, reinforcing the idea of divine rule being supreme. In the Aramaic chapters of Daniel, one sees the “new general theme of the unstoppable establishment of God’s kingdom.”⁹⁷ The divine is invincible and superior to all human might.

Although Aramaic represented the power of empires to create and impose a lingua franca, the authors of Daniel seemed to use this language in order to show that the will of God will ultimately trump and transcend all man-made institutions and expressions of power. Authors were acutely cognizant of the implications behind language choice. They were familiar with Aramaic’s long history as the language of imperial conquest and dominion, yet they used the language to subvert this association of power with Aramaic. In reality, Aramaic was the language through which the Babylonians asserted their authority over others; however, in the book of Daniel, Aramaic is the language through which God declares the end to their rule. The words written by the hand of God in the fifth chapter of the book, מנא מנא תקל ופרסין, are clearly Aramaic, yet these Aramaic words signal the demise and defeat of the Babylonians.

וּדְנָה כְּתָבָא, דִּי רְשִׁים: מְנָא מְנָא, תְּקֵל וּפְרִסִין.

And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN

Daniel 5:35

This verse is an excellent example of how the *Tendenz* of divine power is featured within Aramaic Daniel, and the situation is ironic for a number of reasons and subverts our expectations. Firstly, Belshazzar had used the vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem and used them for his own purpose. This was an act of flaunting one’s power: by plundering and

⁹⁷ Albertz, Rainer, *The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel*,” 183

repurposing the items of a conquered people. However, in response, the divine intervenes and makes a display of his own power by writing on the wall. The irony continues as all the local Babylonian magicians and sages are unable to decipher the meaning, and the king must resort to seeking the help of Daniel, a deportee from the same city as the desecrated vessels.⁹⁸ This portrayal makes the Babylonian appear weak and helpless (אֲדָרְיָן מֶלֶכָּא זִיזְהִי שְׂגוּהִי וְרַעֲיִנְהִי יִבְהִלְוּנָהּ) - *Then the king's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts affrighted him* – Daniel 5:7). This stands in deep contrast to the image of power that the king had previously attempted to project.

Furthermore, the Aramaic words מְנָא תְקֵל וּפְרָסִין (“numbered,” “weighed,” and “divided”) written on the wall not only play an important role in advancing the plot of the story, they also contribute to consolidate the power narrative and *Tendenz* the authors attempt to construct. Writing serves as an overt demonstration of power and authority – in this case, by engraving these words, the divine asserts his control and dominion over worldly kingdoms. The words etched onto the wall spell doom for the Babylonians – in their own language. While the Babylonians’ inability to decipher ostensibly Aramaic words has been a point of contention,⁹⁹ the most significant component of our argument is that God reveals the extent of his power and might by engaging in the act of writing, which is consistent with the *Tendenz* of Aramaic Daniel that Albertz Rainer previously identified.

⁹⁸ This seems to be yet another similarity in the accounts of Daniel and Joseph, as Joseph – a foreigner – was also sought out to give advice to the king in Genesis 41.

⁹⁹ Daniel Instone Brewer, “Mene Mene Teqel Uparsin: Daniel 5:25 in Cuneiform,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (1991): 310-316. In his article, Instone makes the argument that the original writing on the wall was not actually in Aramaic but rather in cuneiform script, which was then translated to the Aramaic language for the king by Daniel before the text was interpreted, spelling out doom for Belshazzar and his reign. Instone argues that what was actually written was scratches that represented cuneiform numerical writing.

Writing as a practice has long been associated with the power of divinity. In his monograph, *How the Bible Became a Book*, William Schniedewind terms this affiliation as the “numinous power of writing.”¹⁰⁰ Writing was meant “to engender religious awe,” and it was wielded as a tool by divine beings, having “supernatural powers to bless and curse.”¹⁰¹ Although Schniedewind says this with regard to earlier societies, this argument can be extrapolated to discuss the use of writing in the fifth chapter of Daniel. It is in this chapter that the supernatural associations with writing are explicit. A hand sent from God inexplicably appears and carves unintelligible words on the wall. The inability to decipher the meaning of the inscription and the subsequent commotion contribute to establishing the numinous power of writing.

Writing has a supernatural quality to it; this chapter in Daniel captures this realization perfectly. Not only is the act already a sufficient display of power, but the inability of the scribes to read the message underscores the helplessness of mankind in contrast to the omnipotence of the divine.

אָדוֹן עֲלֵיָן כָּל חֲכִימֵי מַלְכָּא; וְלֹא-כָהְלִין כְּתָבָא לְמַקְרָא וּפְשָׁרָהּ (וּפְשָׁרָהּ) לְהוֹדְעָה לְמַלְכָּא

Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation. – Daniel 5:8

Belshazzar and the court are plunged into linguistic chaos and confusion, and only Daniel can decode the enigma (רַז, ¹⁰² which is a Persian loanword in Aramaic) due to divine inspiration. The

¹⁰⁰ Schniedewind, William, *How the Bible Became a Book*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 24

¹⁰² A. E. Harvey, “The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31, no. 2, (1980): 330. In his article, Harvey discusses the popularization of the term *raz* in the book of Daniel and how Daniel becomes a privileged seer given access to divine secrets, writing the following,

story celebrates the divine's ability to wield writing as a means to assert his dominion while befuddling earthly elites and rulers. Donald Polaski describes the power play in this scene: "The powerlessness of Belshazzar and the court of Babylon, thematized as a lack of control of writing, is balanced by the power of God and the heavenly court, who use writing to great effect."¹⁰³ The writing on the wall is yet another example of the *Tendenz* of the Aramaic portion of Daniel, and the authors were conscious of the effect the Aramaic words on the wall would have on their audience. They set up the story in a way to show how God is ultimately control of writing as well as language. Furthermore, in this scene, Aramaic becomes the language used to declare impending doom and detriment, in stark contrast to its prestigious role as an imperial lingua franca. The Aramaic language plays an important role in reinforcing the *Tendenz* of divine power.

The thematic centrality of power and authority is reinforced by the Aramaic jargon and terminology used within the text. Although Aramaic occupied a prominent position as a symbol of earthly power and monarchical might, the text uses the language to subvert the expectations of the readers. Written in the language representative of earthly power, Aramaic Daniel elevates divine authority as supreme to all human institutions - this is the *Tendenz* of the work. It is also crucial to understand the linguistic terminology used by the authors of Daniel to strengthen the

"But the raz, though it may be concealed and secret for the time being, is destined to be revealed, and the root glh is used with it again and again (God is a 'revealer of mysteries' in Daniel)."

¹⁰³ Donald C. Polaski, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin: Writing and Resistance in Daniel 5 and 6." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 4 (2004): 649–669.

recurring theme of power in the book. In Daniel 5:24, the inscription is said to be directly from God himself.

בִּאֲדִין מִן-קְדָמוֹהִי שְׁלִים, פָּסָא דִי-יָדָא; וּכְחָבָא דְנָה רְשִׁים.

Then was the palm of the hand sent from before Him, and this writing was inscribed. – Daniel 5:24

The author of Daniel wanted no ambiguity regarding the origins of the writing. This was an act that foremost demonstrated the magnitude of divine power and its ability to dumbfound wise men and confound the supreme leader of Babylon. In addition, Donald Polaski points out that the Aramaic expression מן קדמ is consistent semantic value throughout Aramaic Daniel, where it is only ever used in the context of attributing power to a being, human or divine: “The phrase מן קדמ is common in Aramaic Daniel, always with either God or a king as its object. The use of the phrase in the description of the hand highlights God’s imperial role, explicitly asserted in Daniel’s preceding speech.”¹⁰⁴ The use of specific terminology reinforces the *Tendenz* of power that the narrative of Aramaic Daniel presents. Language and lexicon choice are two strategies employed by the writers of Daniel to efficaciously convey their message that God prevails over mankind and that his power transcends all human abilities.

This *Tendenz* of divine power and supremacy is also visible in Daniel chapter 4, where King Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and forced to extol the Most High God. Interestingly, he does it in his native idiom, Aramaic, a language that represents the pinnacle of his political might.

קִעוּ אֲנָה נְבֻכַדְנֶצַר מְשֻׁבַח וּמְרוֹמִים וּמְהֻדָּר לְמִלְכָּהּ שְׁמִיָּא דִי כָּל-מַעְבְּדוֹהִי קִשְׁט וְאַרְחָתָהּ דִּין וְדִי מְהֻלְכִין בְּגִנְהָ, יָכַל

לְהַשְׁפִּילָהּ

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 658.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven; for all His works are truth, and His ways justice; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase – Daniel 4:34

The entire sequence depicted the journey of the king from pride to humility and from transgression to contrition, reinforcing the lowliness of mankind in comparison to the sublime dominion of God. However, having the king acknowledge his error and declare his praise for God in his native tongue reinforce the morale of the story and constitute perhaps the greatest act of humility.

As mentioned previously, in Daniel 1:4, the new arrivals were to be educated in the Chaldean language (ספר ולשון כשדים). This re-education policy in Aramaic was an effective means to forcibly assimilate the deported population. In addition, it demonstrated the power the Babylonians had over their captives. Aramaic was associated with control and the supremacy of the Babylonian Empire over all peoples. In Daniel 1:4, the authors of Daniel accurately depicted Aramaic as the imperial language it was, one that connoted power, military prowess, and political dominance. Yet by the fourth chapter the readers' expectations are thoroughly subverted; Aramaic becomes the language of confession and penitence. In both verses 31 and 34, Nebuchadnezzar utters two doxologies, simultaneously creating a literary *inclusio* as well as reinforcing the theological message that the Divine appoints whom he pleases to positions of power.¹⁰⁵ The Aramaic-speaking supreme ruler Nebuchadnezzar becomes the mouthpiece for the redactor of the text. In addition, the Aramaic language is now a symbol of God's power over man, no longer an instrument of political tyranny. In a way, Nebuchadnezzar's change of heart

¹⁰⁵ Matthias Henze, *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar: The Ancient Near Eastern Origins & Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 17.

is paralleled by a change in the symbolic value of his native Aramaic. Just as the king experiences a shift in character and attitude, the portrayal of Aramaic experiences a literary shift. Formerly the language of empire and a symbol of political might, its role has undergone significant transformation, becoming the language of repentance and recognition of the legitimacy and God's rule over the world.

***Tendenz* of Hebrew Daniel**

While Daniel 2-7 forms a linguistically uniform entity,¹⁰⁶ the author transitions back to Hebrew in the eighth chapter of the book until the end. As argued hitherto, this linguistic switch was intentional and deliberate. In the minds of the redactors, they had demarcated Hebrew and Aramaic as two separate languages with unique literary functions. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the use of Hebrew accompanies and reinforces the shift in the *Tendenz* of the narrative. Aramaic served as the language of politics and empire, serving as the prestige language as well as the lingua franca of the kingdom. The authors therefore employed Aramaic, not only to give the text more authenticity, but to also convey a message of a political nature – that the power of God far exceeds that of any earthly forces. The *Tendenz* of Aramaic Daniel thus centers around this theme of divine authority. However, Rainer Albertz observes a discernible shift in *Tendenz* when the text resumes in Hebrew: “The *Tendenz* of the Hebrew apocalypse differs from that of the Aramaic, which is clearly demonstrated by comparing their

¹⁰⁶ Wesselius, “The Literary Character of the Book of Daniel and the Linguistic Character of its Aramaic,” 256. Regarding the internal consistency within the Aramaic portions of Daniel and how they constitute one coherent perciope, Wesselius writes: “The Aramaic part of the book looks like a separate unity, among other things because a clear concentric structure can be recognized: predictions about the course of history in 2 and 7, martyrs' stories in 3 and 6, and enigmatic predictions to the eastern kings about the direct future of their reign in chs. 4 and 5.” C.f. also A. Lenglet, “La structure litt'eraire de Daniel 2–7,” *Biblica* 53 (1972), 169-90.

closing visions.”¹⁰⁷ Aramaic is used in the first half of the book to delineate the historical events and personal experiences of deportees in the Babylonian polity. Furthermore, these chapters have the literary function of addressing the ongoing power play between God and man, ascribing victory in all cases to the former. Nevertheless, Hebrew occurs in the second half of the book in conjunction with a shift in focus. Daniels 7-12 form a cohesive unit, but the emphasis has become eschatological, not political. In essence, the scope of chapters 7-12 is theological, differing drastically from the *Tendenz* of power seen in early sections of the book.¹⁰⁸ It is unsurprising that the shift in *Tendenz* is accompanied by the change in language choice. Hebrew has represented the language of the Judean community and had connotations of sacredness and spirituality. The authors were well aware of the ramifications of composing in Hebrew; by recording the eschatological visions of Daniel in Hebrew, they were reinforcing the spiritual quality of the language.

In essence, the writer of Daniel was well aware of the distinct purposes for each respective language and sought to separate them accordingly, depending on the content of the text. Aramaic was to be used for the documentation of histories that take place in the context of empire and political upheaval. Conversely, Hebrew was reserved for matters of spiritual import and theological significance for the Judean community. Therefore, the switch to Hebrew was meant to serve as a signal for the religious- and theological-oriented nature of the upcoming chapters. The visions of Daniel are written mostly in Hebrew, which was necessary, as tradition

¹⁰⁷ Albertz, “The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel,” 191

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 192

has it that angels were unable to understand Aramaic.¹⁰⁹ These visions describe the end times and divine intervention where God interferes and destroys the wicked. This is the main *Tendenz* of Hebrew Daniel, set in the backdrop of the Hellenistic Period, where the Judeans became the victims of religious persecution who witnessed the disruption of their cultic practices by Antiochus.¹¹⁰ The theological *Tendenz*, therefore, was aimed at an audience who felt dismayed by the undermining of their religion by foreign rulers. Martin A. Sweeney believes that the vision accounts and the use of mythological language reveal a hidden priestly interest in restoring the Temple to Judean control at some point in the future.¹¹¹ The use of Hebrew in the recording of Daniel's apocalyptic visions was hence a means for the author's to shift gears and turn the focus to the spiritual and religious needs of the community.

Even so, the bilingual nature of Daniel has led many scholars to express skepticism regarding its composition by a single author, potentially undermining the theory of language consciousness, with each language having its own unique function. John J. Collins writes, "One of the oddities of the book is that the division by language does not fully coincide with genre."¹¹² While it has been argued that overall there seems to be some sort of alignment between the shift in *Tendenz* and the change in language, Collins is right to point out that

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Yahalom, "Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47.1 (1996): 33-44.

¹¹⁰ Alberty, "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," 192.

¹¹¹ Sweeney, Martin A. "The End of Eschatology in Daniel? Theological and Socio-Political Ramifications of the Changing Contexts of Interpretation." *Biblical Interpretation* 9, no. 2 (2001), 123-140.

¹¹² John J. Collins, "Daniel, 1–2 Maccabees." *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2018), 361. Collins mentions that although most of the visions are written in Hebrew, chapter 7 is written in Aramaic, showing some language-genre inconsistency.

language and content do not completely correspond to one another. Content-wise, the book of Daniel can be subdivided to two internally cohesive halves: chapters 1-6 are court-tales, while 7-12 are apocalyptic visions.¹¹³ However, language use in the book of Daniel – while somewhat similar – does not perfectly align with this content-based division. This has led Collins to argue that the text came to exist via multiple-layered redaction.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, other scholars have disputed this assumption that Daniel was not composed as a single unit simply because of the imperfect overlap between content and language use. Philip R. Davies, for example, attributes Daniel’s compilation to multiple rounds of redaction simply based on chapter 1 being in Hebrew and chapter 7 being in Aramaic. Nonetheless, this is dubious, and one should not dismiss the possibility that the book was a bilingual composition in its original form.¹¹⁵ Benjamin Victor Waters also thinks that the work may have been composed originally in two languages, and he believes these inconsistencies are merely the result of authors attempting to achieve a great number of things within one text: “The relevant discontinuities in language, genre, and protagonist(s) can be more naturally attributed to the complex literary goals of this group rather than a complex history of development. In particular, the overall structure and

¹¹³ Sweeney, “The End of Eschatology in Daniel,” 126.

¹¹⁴ Collins, “Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees,” 361.

¹¹⁵ Philip R. Davies, “Eschatology in the Book of Daniel.” *JSOT* 17 (1980), 49. Davies writes, “It seems especially precarious to rest any theory of the composition of Daniel on the phenomenon of the two languages; there is no reasonably simple explanation for the fact that the first chapter (plus the opening verses of 50 ch. 2) are in Hebrew, while chs. 2-7 are in Aramaic. The suggestion that the book as a whole originated as a bi-lingual product cannot be dismissed a priori; the problems this hypothesis entails are no greater than those entailed by a theory of retranslation, for which there is no textual, and only dubious linguistic, evidence.”

bilingual nature of their work was most likely inspired by that of the book of Ezra.”¹¹⁶ This view is also echoed by Wesselius, who contends that the bilingual Hebrew-Aramaic format of the book of Daniel was an emulation of the style of Ezra.¹¹⁷ This is significant for understanding language consciousness, for writers composed in both languages had specific intentions in mind when switching between them. Each language portion has a distinct *Tendenz* and literary focus.

In essence, if one views the book of Daniel holistically, one would see that there are at least two major kinds of *Tendenz*, which largely correspond to the use of different languages. Such is the overall effect of bilingualism on the book’s literary interpretation that is the central evidence for language consciousness. In other words, they were conscious of their ability and positions of influence and consequently sought to convey multifaceted messages to their readers by establishing a clear literary *Tendenz* using recurring themes and changing languages appropriately. The authors of Daniel had manifold objectives when writing in both Hebrew and Aramaic, making language consciousness an ever-present component of the text.

Difficulties with the Idea of Hebrew Tendenz vs. Aramaic Tendenz: Chapter 1 and 7

However, it is important to emphasize that this is by no means a perfect formula. In fact, while the idea of having one distinct *Tendenz* for the Hebrew section and another *Tendenz* for

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Victor Waters, “The Two Eschatological Perspectives of the Book of Daniel,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 30, no. 1 (2016): 91-111

¹¹⁷ Jan-Wim Wesselius, “The Literary Nature of the Book of Daniel and the Linguistic Character of its Aramaic,” 254. “It becomes clear that a number of issues, which appeared like formidable and to all appearances insoluble problems, can be explained from the literary nature of the book of Daniel without much effort. Thus even the perennial question why Daniel contains both Hebrew and Aramaic parts is answered by the observation that the distribution of these two languages constitutes a literary emulation of the situation in Ezra.”

the Aramaic section is appealing, in actuality, the demarcation in the literary content of the book does not align so neatly. For the most part, Aramaic is indeed the language of regal authority and the court, and Hebrew is the language of eschatology, yet there are two obvious exceptions that cause this argument to falter: Hebrew is the language of chapter 1, although the content pertains to the affairs of the monarchy and administration. Similarly, chapter 7 is written in Aramaic, although it contains an eschatological vision. Both of these cases go against the general observation we established regarding *Tendenz* in the book of Daniel.

One possible explanation comes from John Collins. He argues that chapters 2-6 (which form a coherent Aramaic unit) and chapters 8-12 (which form a coherent Hebrew unit) were part of the original version of Daniel. Chapters 1 and 7 were later appended to each unit, and each chapter serves an important structural purpose.¹¹⁸ A.E. Portier Young later develops Collins' argument and elucidates the precise functions of both chapter 1 and 7.

Although the majority of the first half of Daniel is written in Aramaic, Daniel 1 begins in Hebrew as a way to frame the identity of the exilic community.¹¹⁹ Using Hebrew establishes internal continuity with the pre-exilic period and the times of kings in Judah, all of which are chronicled in Hebrew. The strategic use of Hebrew to connect readers to earlier historical periods is referred to by Portier-Young as a "backward link," with Hebrew serving as a "base language for the book's multilingual discourse."¹²⁰ Therefore, although the use of Hebrew seems to be incongruent with the prevalence of Aramaic in subsequent chapters, it was an

¹¹⁸ John Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, with an Excursus on the Apocalyptic Genre* (Wilmington, DE, 1981), 15.

¹¹⁹ Anthea E. Portier-Young, "Languages of Identity and Obligation: Daniel as a Bilingual Book," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (2010): 110.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

important literary decision meant to introduce Daniel and his comrades and cement their connection to their Judean heritage. This is a form of language consciousness on the part of the authors, as they were aware of the import of using Hebrew in the introductory chapter.

Portier-Young also provides an explanation for the use of Aramaic in chapter 7. While it initially appears strange to have Aramaic in the first chapter of the Hebrew half of the book, chapter 7 serves as a proper conclusion to the previous Aramaic section. Chapter 7 heralds the ends of empires and their replacement with divine rule.¹²¹ Daniel 7:9 shows the beginning of the regime of a supernatural ruler in lieu of the earthly kings who had dominated up to this point.

חָזָה הַגּוֹיִת עַד דֵּי כָרְסוֹן רְמִיּוֹ וְעַתִּיק יוֹמִין יָתֵב

And I looked till thrones were placed, where the Ancient of Days sat. – Daniel 7:9

The role of Aramaic in Daniel 7 is similar to the appearance of Aramaic in Jeremiah. “Daniel’s vision passes judgment on empire in the language of empire, just as the book of Jeremiah used Aramaic to condemn the false gods of the nations.”¹²² While Aramaic had previously represented a language of worldly dominion and authority, in chapter 7, it becomes the language through which the replacement of human kingdoms is announced. This is yet another example of language consciousness on the part of the authors of Daniel.

¹²¹ Ibid., 112.

¹²² Ibid., 112.

Hebrew Portion – Daniel 8-12:

Before concluding our discussion on the book of Daniel, it is important to mention the role of the last five Hebrew chapters (8-12). While we have previously contended that they are all eschatological visions (and are therefore written in Hebrew), these chapters have other important roles assigned by the authors.

The use of Hebrew in the last chapters of Daniel is meant to create a dual effect: on one hand, Hebrew should resonate with the audience as something familiar, as it was the language that documented the affairs of the pre-exilic community and was also used in the first chapter of the book. However, on the other hand, the Hebrew in Daniel 8-12 is linguistically strange and different. Jin Hee Han writes that the use of this kind of Hebrew serves to “radically revise the way of life, the way of perception, and the way of existence.”¹²³ The Hebrew presents a new dimension to the community, one that is both familiar yet novel. Portier-Young concludes that “the difficult language...disorient in order to reorient.”¹²⁴ Essentially, the authors are creating a new sort of identity for the people, one that is rooted in the past yet looks toward the future, and the use of Hebrew helps to achieve this literary objective. The use of convoluted Hebrew is yet another example of the language consciousness operating within the Book of Daniel and shows that it is indeed a powerful force.

Conclusions Regarding Bilingualism in Daniel

Bilingualism within the book of Daniel, therefore, was a thoughtfully planned move on the part of the writers, who used each language strategically in order to achieve specific literary

¹²³ Jin Hee Han, *Daniel's Spiel. Apocalyptic Literacy in the Book of Daniel* (Lanham, 2008), 7.

¹²⁴ Portier-Young, “Languages of Identity and Obligation,” 114.

goals and to convey background information to their audience regarding the sociolinguistic context of the protagonists. Using Hebrew was an act of resistance; in spite of its waning influence, Hebrew was the language reserved for documenting Judean resilience when confronted with cultural dilemmas and religious trials. Furthermore, the Hebrew portions have an identifiable *Tendenz*, associated with eschatology and the rule of God in the end times. Conversely, Aramaic was the language of administration and prestige and was therefore used in situations where the language would have predominated in real life. In addition, there was also an explicit Aramaic *Tendenz*, which had to do with power and how God's rule trumps any earthly dominion. The alignment between content and language is so delicately executed that it certainly was the product of acute language consciousness of the part of postexilic authors.

CHAPTER 3: BILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS IN EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

In the previous chapter, I contended that the bilingual text within Daniel strategically fulfilled the literary and religious objectives of the redactors. However, the chronologically earlier book of Ezra also features bilingualism, leading some scholars such as Daniel Snell to suggest that the composition and linguistic bifurcation of Daniel was the result of emulating the literary style of Ezra.¹²⁵ However, the two books are fundamentally different in the organization and presentation of their content as well as the ways through which Aramaic is interwoven into the text. This study analyzes the two books separately rather than following Snell's assumption that one is simply the literary byproduct of another. In this way, the complexities of the Hebrew-Aramaic interplay within each book can be individually addressed.

Overall, language choice functions differently in Ezra than it does in Daniel, although there is some undeniable overlap. For instance, while both books share the thematic elements of Jewish survivalism, the central premise under which each book operates differs significantly. While the content of Daniel centers on the continuity and preservation of Judean religious tradition in a foreign land, Ezra is concerned with the revival of the cult and the reinvigoration of Judean spirit in Yehud. Ezra goes beyond Daniel in its quest for religious transcendence: not only are the Judeans expected to maintain their religious identity, they are expected to actively participate in rebuilding the community and the restoration of the cult. Together with

¹²⁵e.g. Daniel Snell, "Why is there Aramaic in the Bible?," *JSOT* 18 (1980), 33.

Nehemiah, the book of Ezra provides a means to understand “emergent Judaism.”¹²⁶ This was the primary concern of the leaders of the fledgling Judean community in Jerusalem: the successful revitalization of the Judean faith and its implementation for subsequent generations. Likewise, the writers of Ezra documenting this process likely shared the same sense of urgency, and they used the Hebrew and Aramaic languages strategically to ensure that their message was conveyed to their presumably bilingual audience. Therefore, the reasons for bilingualism in Ezra bear greater hermeneutical import because of the spiritually evocative nature of the book’s content. Hebrew is intentionally used in juxtaposition with Aramaic in order to reinforce an explicit message regarding the role of each language within post-exilic Judaism. The underlying complexities of bilingual redaction within Ezra again testifies to author cognizance regarding the role and function of language within the newly re-established Judean community.

Aramaic in the Book of Ezra: Authenticity of the Documents

Because the narrative focal point of Ezra centers on the affairs of the Judean community, it may initially seem counterintuitive that the authors would incorporate Aramaic into the text rather than composing it exclusively in Hebrew. In fact, the presence of Aramaic in the book of Ezra has proven to be a contentious issue among academic circles. Aramaic occupies two protracted sections within the Hebrew text, beginning in Ezra 4:8-6:18 and re-appearing again in 7:12-26. In both cases, the ostensible reason for using Aramaic was the representation of documents in their original language: first a letter composed by Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe with vocal opposition to Judean efforts to rebuild the

¹²⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 38. Blenkinsopp also argues that Ezra and Nehemiah are considered one literary unit in Biblical canon as shown by the overlap of common literary themes and the structure of the content.

Jerusalem the temple, followed by a regal edict from Ahasuerus in response to the complaint. The second Aramaic section starting in chapter 7 is yet another royal decree, nullifying the previous mandate issued. However, while some scholars accept the veracity of these Aramaic portions as authentic transcripts of royal exchanges, others have viewed the documents with skepticism, suspecting that portions of it are the result of possible interpolation or even fabrication by the authors.¹²⁷ It is understandable how the inexplicable embedment of large blocks of Aramaic within an otherwise Hebrew text would raise suspicion regarding its authenticity. Bob Becking also raises question regarding the authenticity of the Aramaic documents to the lack of comparative material.¹²⁸

Nonetheless, while many question the veracity of the Aramaic content, others hold views to the contrary. Arguments in favor of its authenticity comes from the evaluation of the multiple components which form the Aramaic missives. The composition of the book in a quasi-Imperial Aramaic register in conjunction with the presence of Persian loanwords provide linguistic evidence for its existence as an original document composed during the Achaemenid

¹²⁷ C.C. Torrey, "The Aramaic Portions of Ezra." *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 24, no. 3 (1908): 250. Torrey writes the following about the integration of the Aramaic document in chapter 4 of Ezra, claiming that verses 9-10 are an interpolation and represent a different hand than the previous verses.

“On further consideration, it has seemed to me that the true explanation is simpler than this, and that vs. 8, in exactly its present wording, originally formed the beginning of the document incorporated by the Chronicler. The conclusion follows of necessity, that the vss. 9-10 are an interpolation; for it is quite obvious that the man who wrote vs. 8 cannot have written the first words of vs. 9 as its continuation. The incorporated narrative, moreover, is not very likely to have begun with the word *l’s;* but this would have been a natural way of beginning the interpolation, which is, indeed, made in the easiest possible manner.”

¹²⁸ Bob Becking, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity*, (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

administration.¹²⁹ In addition, there is an ostensible literary purpose for preserving the documents in the original language. Historian Eduard Meyer in his classic monograph *Die Entstehung des Judentums* was one of the first to argue that the content of the book of Ezra is comprised of authentic and historically accurate sources. In fact, he believes not only in their reliability as source material but also in their literary import, as they give the audience a much clearer understanding into the Judean and Persian context:

Damit wäre, denke ich, nicht nur die Aechtheit der im Buche Ezra überlieferten aramäischen Dokumente gegen alle Einwände erwiesen, sondern mehrfach auch ein klarer Einblick in die Bedeutung dieser für die jüdische wie für die persische Geschichte unschätzbaren Urkunden gewonnen.¹³⁰

With this, I believe, not only is the authenticity of the Aramaic documents of the book of Ezra evident – in spite of all opinions to the contrary – but we also gain a clearer impression of the meaning of these invaluable documents for Jewish and Persian history.

Furthermore, Meyer calls the dubious view of previous scholars into question. He contends that the fact that the royal edicts and missives are composed in Aramaic should not be taken as an argument against their authenticity; in contrast, it would be expected that the letters would be composed in that language.¹³¹ Dirk Schwiderski adopts Meyer's stance and has become a

¹²⁹ Janzen, David. "The 'Mission' of Ezra and the Persian-Period Temple Community." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 119, no. 4 (2000): 620.

¹³⁰ Eduard Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums: Eine Historische Untersuchung*. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1896), 9.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 10, "Dass die Urkunden aramäisch abgefasst sind, ist kein Argument gegen ihre Aechtheit, sondern genau das was wir in einem authentischen Dokument aus der Persezeit erwarten müssen."

proponent regarding their authenticity. He does so by examining the Aramaic portions in Ezra to the Aramaic letter tradition (“aramäische Brieftraditionen”).¹³²

Such a notion is certainly compatible with the historical understanding of the linguistic and sociological evolution of the Near East under a series of empires leading up to the Persian Period. With Aramaic emerging as the primary language of the empire’s centralized administration, it is hardly unsurprising that a royal edict issued by the king would be recorded in its original form. In fact, to translate it to Hebrew should render one more suspicious with regards to the underlying interpolation process. One should note, however, that the edict of Cyrus in the first chapter of Ezra, for instance, is presented in Hebrew, which was not a language the monarch would have employed for the composition of a politically important decree. This would seemingly subvert the expectation that an edict of political import should be preserved in the original tongue. However, Lester Grabbe rejects this by accentuating the spiritual significance of the decree as the result of divine intervention, thereby necessitating its translation to Hebrew as a means to acknowledge YHWH’s involvement in influencing political strategy to benefit his people.¹³³ Therefore, with the exception of the Cyrus decree, all other governmental and administrative documents are recorded in the original language, giving the book an authentic feel.

¹³² Dirk Schwiderski, *Handbuch des nordwestsemitischen Briefformulars*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 8.

¹³³ Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 11.

Linguistic Awareness in Ezra

While the use of different languages in the text of Ezra constitutes an issue of great dispute and polemic among scholars with regards to the authenticity of the individual elements, it is important for our purpose to focus on the work of Ezra as a bilingual composite, disregarding the tangential discussions as to veracity. Whether the Aramaic portions constitute a forgery on the part of the authors or genuine transcriptions of court-issued decrees is of lesser significance to this study. The bilingual nature of the text testifies to the convoluted sociolinguistic dynamics in which the Judean community in Jerusalem during the Persian Period found itself.¹³⁴ The possibility that the authors of Ezra may have interpolated and imposed their own ideas on the Aramaic is less relevant. The most significant aspect for the purposes of discussing and proving language consciousness within the text is the understanding of authorial intentionality. What were the driving factors that propelled authors to make decisions to use specific languages in certain contexts? The argument that Aramaic documents are authentic is therefore helpful in that it helps to explicate why Aramaic is there in the first place, but the objective of this study is not to address scholarly debate regarding authenticity and redactional modifications. To acknowledge concerns on both sides is adequate for our purposes. Whether the documents are authentic or not does not significantly alter the nature of our discussion regarding authorial intentionality.

In either case, linguistic awareness can be demonstrated in either scenario. Even if we accept the argument that the authors purposely tampered with the text by forcibly rendering the documents into Aramaic, it would demonstrate that they were still operating with a keen sense

¹³⁴ Bernard Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*, 38-40.

language consciousness. They must have been unequivocally aware of the prominent position of Aramaic at the time and how Aramaic would have predominated in all matters pertaining to politics, monarchial decrees, and administrative matters. As a result, Aramaic would be the expected language of formal correspondence; consequently, the authors would have sought to render their own account more credible by using the appropriate language. Conversely, if we accept the argument that the documents are genuine transcriptions of the political missives, this could also support the idea of language consciousness. Authors purposely integrated real sources in the original language into their text, resulting in a planned linguistic transition. Aramaic as the imperial lingua franca stands in sharp contrast to Hebrew, a humble language relegated to local issues and the tongue of an ethnoreligious minority. The linguistic tension in the text would therefore reflect the language conflict of the time, as Judeans navigated both Hebrew and Aramaic.

In order to understand the function of bilingualism within the book of Ezra, one must examine the sociolinguistic context in which the work was composed, as well as the intercommunal dynamics the book reflects. Ezra takes place in a multiethnic, multilingual setting, where Judeans come into contact with peoples of various ethnicities and heritages while accepting their status as subjects of a foreign dominion. The content of the book shows the tension, skepticism, and volatility of such a situation, in which the fledgling Judean community in Jerusalem encounters adversity due to the hostility of neighboring peoples. Language division within Ezra, therefore, can be viewed as a reflection of this unpleasant interracial mingling, where the marked change in language within the text is used as a strategy to accentuate the uneasy nature of interethnic contact. The switch to Aramaic in Ezra 4:7, in this vein, is meant to underscore the ethnic hostility that is being chronicled in the book. Just as

much as in the case of Daniel, the book of Ezra takes language choice seriously and uses it strategically to more efficiently convey an intended message.

The composer of Ezra wishes to establish an affiliation between linguistic differences and ethnic intolerance. Although both vernacular and written Aramaic were widely understood by the Judean community in Jerusalem of the time and was quite likely even a dominant spoken language, Aramaic did not enjoy the same degree of veneration and prestige in Judean circles as Hebrew did.¹³⁵ Part of this can likely be attributed to the universal role of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* in the Near East. Although Hebrew was relegated to a much more restrictive function, it was much more closely associated with Judeans and Judaism. Therefore, Hebrew still persisted as the representative language of the Judean people in Late Biblical literature, while Aramaic retained a sense of foreignness and was in direct association with non-Judean entities and antagonists. Even as the Judeans learned other languages, Judeans continued to cling to Hebrew and affiliated it with holiness and sanctity.¹³⁶ Again, the text reflects this linguistic tension within the community, where Aramaic had a pragmatic role in mundane life while Hebrew still retained spiritual importance.

The transition between the languages is skillfully executed and reflects the cognitive investment of the authors in their literary production. The switch does not occur arbitrarily or inexplicably, but rather in a specific context which necessitates language change. In the book of Daniel, the transition to Aramaic occurred in conjunction with the introduction of the Chaldean

¹³⁵ John Myhill, *Language in Jewish Society*, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2004), 116.

¹³⁶ Angel Saenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2; see also: *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 4, The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, edited by Steven T. Katz, 457.

magicians to the scene. Likewise, in the book of Ezra, the switch from Hebrew to Aramaic in the fourth chapter takes place with the mention of the various nations which sought to appeal to the king in order to undermine the Judean efforts to rebuild the temple. The text lists the plaintiff ethnic groups in the Aramaic language:

דינא ונאפרסתכנא טרפלינא אפרסנא, ארכוי (ארפנא) ברלינא שושנכנא, דהוא (דהנא) עלמנא. ושאר אמיא, די הגלי
אסנפר רבא ונקירא, והותב המו

The Dinites, and the Apharesattechites, the Tarpelites, the Apharesites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Shushanchites, the Dehites, the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asenappar brought over, and set in the city of Samaria, and the rest that are in the country beyond the River. – Ezra 4:9-10

The detailed record of the foreign entities protesting against the ongoing reconstruction enables us to understand the extent of the ethnic discord. The text revisits historical events by stating that these were the nations whom a previous monarch had deported and resettled in the land, reminiscing the events of the invasion and fall of Samaria in 2 Kings 17. The mention of “city of Samaria” is a direct reference to the Assyrian two-way deportation practices.¹³⁷ The text shows that the consequences of the forced deportations and population swaps carried out under the Assyrians could still be felt centuries later. The cultural (and presumably linguistic) dissonance persists and becomes a cause for subsequent conflict between the Judeans and the new settlers of the land. These Aramaic-speaking peoples are portrayed in a negative light. Reinhard Kratz writes, “These enemies are identical with the destroyers of the temple, but are nonetheless defamed as strangers...opposing them were the (Judaic) Gola, the returnees from

¹³⁷ Bustanay Oded, “II Kings 17: Between History and Polemic,” *Jewish History* 2, no.2 (1983): 41.

Babylon who felt that they alone were entitled to build the temple.”¹³⁸ Indeed, the authors have set up a series of binaries in the text, and language is one of the dividing factors between groups of people hostile to one another. Both sides are religiously, culturally, and linguistically distinct, and the switch from Hebrew to Aramaic is meant to underscore the extent of their differences.

On the one side are the Judean exiles who have returned with the explicit purpose to reconstruct the temple and revive the cult. The first three chapters of the book are dedicated to chronicling their return and their initial attempts to resume sacrifice and observation of feast days. Unsurprisingly, these chapters are written in Hebrew, perpetuating the view that Hebrew is the language of the Judean community. As far as the authors are concerned, it is highly appropriate that matters relating to faith be documented in Hebrew. The redactors want readers to associate Hebrew with Judaism and its religious practices. However, on the other side are the adversaries of the Judeans and the antagonists of the books: the gentile people nations that actively oppose the advancement of Judean causes. These “self-professed foreigners” are perceived to pose a threat to the community.¹³⁹ Their language is Aramaic, and the text therefore switches to this language in order to ensure that the audience is aware of the enormous differences separating the two sides. In the case of the book of Ezra, language choice is yet another means for authors to reinforce the message they wish to convey. The foreigners who complained about the Judeans’ attempt to reconstruct the Temple are conferred the label נָכְרִים

¹³⁸ Reinhard G. Kratz, “The Second Temple of Jeb and Jerusalem.” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 255.

¹³⁹ Peter R. Bedford, “Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah.” *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no.2 (2002); 147.

הָאָרֶץ (people of the land),¹⁴⁰ and they emerge as the central antagonists of the book who vehemently oppose every Judean cause. The two groups stand in direct opposition to one another, and their languages are also juxtaposed with one another within the text itself.

Among the many themes of the book of Ezra, Lester Grabbe identifies two of them that stand in contrast to one another: “One theme is the return of people from exile...A counter-theme to this is the danger of foreigners/people of the land to the newly formed community.”¹⁴¹ The use of two distinct languages in the text serves a literary purpose. Both the theme and its counter-theme have their own unique idiom: Hebrew for the former, Aramaic for the latter. Language is a tool that can be wielded to ensure the desired interpretation of the text. The text contains numerous dichotomies: Judean versus Gentile, returnee versus foreigner, Hebrew versus Aramaic. The last of these dichotomies is the most important for us. The same linguistic differences that separated the Judeans and the foreigners are represented directly within the text, so that the reader is forced to navigate the two languages in conflict. All of this testifies to careful planning on the part of the authors, who use language choice to achieve their literary objectives to portray foreigners as the foes of the Judean people.

For the writers of Ezra, a nation is not only characterized by its ethnic makeup, but also by its linguistic composition. We have seen this previously in the book of Daniel, where the Aramaic word אַמְּיָא is always used in the set phrase אַמְּיָא, אַמְּיָא, אַמְּיָא (“peoples, nations, and

¹⁴⁰ Lisbeth S. Fried, “The ‘Am Ha’ares in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Administration,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 141.

¹⁴¹ Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 116.

tongues.”)¹⁴² The close affiliation between nation and language is important for the purposes of appreciating the use of Aramaic at this point. The authors of Ezra hope to reinforce the notion of nation and language being intertwined. Foreign nationals speak different languages, and in Ezra, this language is Aramaic. The use of Aramaic becomes affiliated with the negative portrayal of foreign entities (even though, in reality, many Judeans at the time had become Aramaic-speaking). The switch to Aramaic in Ezra 4:7 is intentional and serves a literary purpose. Regardless of the actual linguistic reality, in the minds of the writers of Ezra, Hebrew was still the language of the Judean community, while Aramaic represented the outside forces that viciously opposed Judean causes for religious autonomy and cultural liberation.

Use of Aramaic to Create an Outsider Perspective

Bill Arnold contends in his article “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible” that the Aramaic in both the books of Ezra and Daniel is used to establish and mark an outsider perspective.¹⁴³ This hypothesis could be useful for corroborating the argument of language consciousness within late biblical literature. The marking of perspective constitutes an act of intentionality on the part of the redactor and reveals the intricate process of textual composition, as authors structure the text in order to guide the reader toward a certain interpretation. Using language choice as a way to mark various perspectives is an excellent authorial strategy to accentuate the growing tension between Judeans and non-Judeans, locals and foreigners. Switching to Aramaic immediately signals a change in viewpoint and narrates the events from the perspective of foreigners. This marks a sharp and clear shift from the Judean-centric nature

¹⁴² c.f. 43-46 of this dissertation for detailed examples from the Book of Daniel of עממא, אמיא, ולשניא

¹⁴³ Arnold, “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible,” 3.

of the earlier chapters pertaining to the return to the land of Jerusalem, rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the cult. When reading the text as a coherent unit, one sees how the change in language demarcates the book and parallels the change in content. Suddenly, the focus is no longer on religion but rather on the realm of politics, as the foreign perspective entails matters of mundane significance, such as political fealty and integrity. The change in perspective is made unmistakable by the change in language.

The idea of embedding an external point of view into the text certainly seems to be a plausible explanation for the use of Aramaic. It gives the language a practical literary function and strategic utility. Linguist Boris Uspensky has scrutinized the use of foreign languages within literature and describes their role “a technical device of representation.”¹⁴⁴ Uspensky’s term proves to be quite useful for the study of Aramaic in the book of Ezra. It represents the foreigners and integrates their perspective into a work that has hitherto concerned itself primarily with documenting the needs and affairs of the insular Judean community. The incorporation of Aramaic into the Hebrew text would reflect an attempt to provide a more holistic view of the whole situation, not only from the perceptive lens of the Judean community, but also from the outside world observing them. The Uspensky approach, which Arnold applies to Biblical studies,¹⁴⁵ provides a reasonable understanding of the phenomenon of bilingualism in the book of Ezra. Joshua Berman accepts the theoretical work of Uspensky and Arnold but

¹⁴⁴ Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 50. Uspensky comments on the use of French in Russian literature (as in the work *War and Peace*) writing the following: “Thus, the French language is necessary to the author of *War and Peace* not so much because it corresponds to the real world described in the work, but as a technical device of representation.”

¹⁴⁵ Arnold, “The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible,” 2-3.

seeks to discover more specifically whose perspective is being represented through the Aramaic. He attributes the Aramaic pericope to a “Samaritan perceptual point of view” and even raises the possibility that it represents the voice of Tattenai, who is mentioned by name in the Ezra 5:3.¹⁴⁶

בַּה זְמַנָּא אֲתָה עָלִיהוֹן תַּתְּנִי פַחַת עֵבֶר-נְהָרָה וְשֹׁמֵר בּוֹזְנֵי--וּכְנָנְתָהוֹן; וְכֹן אֲמָרִין לְהֵם מִן שְׁם לְכֵם טַעַם בְּיָתֵא דְנָה לְבָנָא, וְאַשְׁרָנָא דְנָה לְשַׁכְלָלָהּ.

At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai, and their companions, and said thus unto them: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this structure? – Ezra 5:3

In the above passage, Tattenai, is introduced into the narrative as one of the antagonists of the Judean community in Jerusalem, as he vehemently opposes the rebuilding of the Temple. At this point, the text has switched to Aramaic before introducing Tattenai, who was likely an Aramaic speaker. This follows the simplistic bilingual model to which the writers of Ezra adhere, where Judean protagonists are portrayed as Hebrew-speaking, while non-Judean foes are Aramaic-speaking. Tattenai’s introduction in 5:3 is followed by a copy of his missive in 5:6, where he turns to King Darius in order to prevent Judean efforts of reconstruction.

פְּרָשְׁגֹן אֲנָרְתָא דִּי-שְׁלַח תַּתְּנִי פַחַת עֵבֶר-נְהָרָה, וְשֹׁמֵר בּוֹזְנֵי וּכְנָנְתָהּ, אֲפָרְסָכִיא, דִּי בַעֲבַר נְהָרָה--עַל-דְּרִינֹשׁ, מְלָכָא.

The copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai, and his companions the Apharesachites, who were beyond the River, sent unto Darius the king. – Ezra 5:6

Ezra 5:6 mentions Tattenai working in collusion with the Apharesachites (אֲפָרְסָכִיא), again emphasizing their foreignness. It is unsurprising that the authors used Aramaic to introduce

¹⁴⁶ Joshua Berman, “The Narratorial Voice of the Scribes of Samaria: Ezra IV 8-VI 18 Reconsidered.” *Vetus Testamentum* 56, no. 3 (2006): 326.

these literary figures and document their hostilities towards the Judean community, as language choice helps to crystallize the connection between Aramaic and malicious foreigners in the minds of the readers.

If we accept Joshua Berman's theory, then Ezra 5:3 and 5:6 would appear to be an attempt on the part of the writers to shift the focus on the narrative and frame in from the point of view of non-Judean antagonists. Indeed, there are intriguing hermeneutical implications, and we are left with questions regarding the purpose of such a move. Why incorporate an adversarial perspective into a text that purports to delineate the process of Judean resettlement and cultic revival? While the theory of authors embedding foreign discourse into the book in order to create an external perspective is ostensibly a bold and contentious idea, such a notion is not without precedence in biblical literature.

In a second article regarding the issue, Berman addresses it and attempts to elaborate on the idea of language and outside perspective. He writes, "Why did the author of Ezra resort to an external point of view at this juncture in his story? To be sure, there are many instances in the Bible where information is related to us from the perspective of Israel's adversaries."¹⁴⁷ Berman goes on to cite a list of examples, such as the Egyptians in Exodus 10, the Midianites in Judges 7, and the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4. However, in contrast to the Aramaic pericope inserted in Ezra, all of the aforementioned instances constitute cases where direct speech was used as a way to integrate the perspective of these nations into the Hebraic text. Furthermore, an additional difference between them and Aramaic Ezra (of which Berman is aware) is the length

¹⁴⁷ Joshua Berman, "The Narratological Purpose of Aramaic Prose in Ezra 4.8-6.18." *Aramaic Studies* 5, no.2 (2007): 169.

of text dedicated to illustrating the external perspective. The Aramaic portions of Ezra are long and protracted in comparison to these other examples. Nonetheless, the unifying feature of all these cases is the underlying context which they share. All of these foreign entities are portrayed negatively, yet they are given the literary spotlight as a way to underscore their weakness in light of the power of God. The Egyptians, Midianites, and Philistines were all nation groups that ultimately succumbed to the dominion brought on by the outstretched arm of God. Likewise, the Samaritans and other ethnic groups mentioned in Ezra 4:8 that vehemently protested against the construction of a Judean temple would later be suppressed and humbled. Berman writes, “The reader’s natural affinities are with the Israelite protagonists of a story. By allowing a member of the enemy to speak and proclaim God’s strength, Scripture allows the Israelite reader to see that sometimes his own fears may get the best of him.”¹⁴⁸ The adversarial point of view is an important narratological device and integral element of the text.

When reading certain Biblical accounts, the readers might experience the intensity of God’s intervention on behalf of his people, and an efficient way for writers to achieve this iseffect is by exposing the audience to the enemy perspective. Likewise, the authors of Ezra are keenly aware of the natural empathy experienced by readers when reading about the affairs of the Judean community. Switching to Aramaic and presenting the perspective of the foreigners who stood against the Judeans, however, gives a jolt of literary shock to the audience but has the intended after-effect of rendering them more appreciative of God’s sublime ability to overcome the bitterness of the opposition. The use of Aramaic is a literary device that allows a reader to imagine the situation from the opposite side and to ultimately derive a better

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 170.

understanding of the arduous challenges that the Judeans faced and overcame in order to regain the right to practice their religion.

Hebrew versus Aramaic as a Representation of the Conflict between Foreigners versus the Divine

The obsession and fixation on foreigners are commonly recurring themes throughout late biblical literature. This is hardly surprising, given the historical context and literary setting of these books. Judeans found themselves in an extremely disagreeable situation where they were at the mercy of their foreign captors and were forced to navigate complex situations with various peoples. While skepticism toward foreigners existed for centuries in ancient Israel, Christopher Smith observes that the literature reflects the intensification of these feelings after the return of the Judeans because of “the particular circumstances of tension within the post-exilic communities seeking to rebuild their lives in Palestine during the Persian period.”¹⁴⁹ In a way, given the oppression and affliction of the Judeans in exile at the hands of foreigners, it is understandable that the texts composed during this period would reflect adverse feelings towards non-Judeans as a reaction to the collective trauma experienced. The book of Ezra not only documents the resumption of religious festivities in the city of Jerusalem, but it also uplifts and exalts the resilience and independence of the Judean spirit. It glorifies the restoration of the cult and Judean efforts to embrace their religious uniqueness, and the content of the book is unmistakably priestly. David Kraemer writes regarding the fixation on the cult within Ezra: “The book of Ezra is a priestly book; its concerns are the Temple, the priesthood and Levites,

¹⁴⁹ D.L. Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology" in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996), 119

and purity.”¹⁵⁰ The emphasis on the reinstatement of religious rites and practices is especially apparent in the Hebrew portion of the text. This observation is unsurprising, given that Hebrew was considered to be the language of religion and sanctity.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֵת חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת כַּכְּתוּב וְעִלְתָּ יוֹם בְּיוֹם בְּמִסְפָּר כְּמִשְׁפַּט דְּבַר-יְהוָה בְּיוֹמוֹ.

And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required. –
Ezra 3:4

Ezra 3:4 is just one of many verses from the text that reveal authorial interest in delineating the restoration of the cult and the resumption of religious practices, in accordance with the written law (כְּכָתוּב) and prescribed ordinances (כְּמִשְׁפַּט). The Judean returnees do “as it is written” in Hebrew (not Aramaic). Furthermore, they are commended for their efforts in observing the feast and performing the offerings. This is a watershed moment for the Judean community in Jerusalem, where they are finally able to enjoy some religious autonomy for the first time since the Babylonian Exile.

The objective of late biblical literature is to show the determination of the Judeans to continually practice their religion. In both Ezra and Daniel, the Judean protagonists encounter precarious situations when confronted with the choice between faith and social conformation; however, in every instance, they are ultimately rewarded for holding steadfastly to the former. The return of the Judeans to their homeland, the reconstruction of the temple, and the inauguration of cultic activity are all elements which serve to uplift a Judean spirit, broken and downtrodden after seventy years of exile. Therefore, any individual who seeks to prevent the collective effort of the Judean community to lift themselves up after decades of dejection is

¹⁵⁰ David Kraemer, “On the Relationship of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.” *JSOT* 59 (1997): 77.

immediately cast as the enemy. It is no coincidence that these entities are foreign and non-Judean, as late biblical literature is apt to portray individuals and events of a foreign nature in a negative light.

However, despite the resilience of their spirit, the Judeans in Jerusalem lack political sovereignty and had to resort to imploring foreign rulers to intervene on their behalf. Therefore, when confronted with the prohibition on building, they had no choice but to reach out to the Persian authorities to rule on their behalf. Nonetheless, for a book that so actively promotes the power of God and the Judean faith, being reliant on the mercy of foreigners would constitute an enormous affront and setback. Therefore, the writers of Ezra elevate the importance of prophetic foresight. Christopher Smith writes, “In Ezra 5:1-2, and in reference to the temple work in 6:14, the prophetic authority of Haggai and Zechariah is specifically mentioned before recognizing any authority of the Persian rulers.”¹⁵¹ The authors of the text do not deny that politically speaking, the Judeans are still subject to the regime of foreigners. Yet they try to mitigate and counteract the effect of this by prioritizing religious praxis. Prophecy is more instructive and edifying to the Judean community than any decree of the Persians. In this way, through their religion, Judeans have already been able to secure self-determination and are not completely vulnerable to the whims of an outside ruler. In fact, this tone has been set from the very first verse of the Book of Ezra. Although Cyrus issues a decree to allow the Judeans to return to Jerusalem, the authors do not give foreigners full credit for this kind act. Rather, this decision was a consequence of divine intervention; God stirred the heart of the king in order to fulfill a prophecy regarding the exiles.

¹⁵¹ D.L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 40.

ובשנת אחת, לכורש מלך פרס, לקלות דבר-יהוה, מפיו ירמיה: העיר יהוה, את-רוח פרש מלך-פרס, ויעבר-
קול בכל-מלכותו, וגם-במכתב לאמר.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, **the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia**, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying. – Ezra 1:1

This nullifies the agency of the king and his control. A positive change in events must be ascribed first and foremost to God, showing God's control over all people.¹⁵² Even the decisions of the king are under the dominion of the divine. This is highly reminiscent of Proverbs 21:1, where the heart of a king is like a waterway steered by God:

פלגי-מים לב-מלך ביד-יהוה; על-כל-אשר יחפץ יטנו .

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD as the watercourses: He turneth it whithersoever He will. – Proverbs 21:1

Even a king is subject to the authority and intervention of the divine, who possesses full control of every situation. The theological concerns of the writer of Ezra are clear in their portrayal of the events which ultimately allowed for the reconstruction of the Judean temple and the observation of religious practices. Foreigners are inherently adversarial. They actively oppose Judean causes, and even the rare kindness on their part toward the Judeans is a product of divine interference, not of their own accord.

The theological concerns and the elevation of the role of divine intervention are recurring themes not only in the book of Ezra but also in other places in exilic biblical literature. This agenda of glorifying God and ascribing all favorable circumstances to him is seen throughout Nehemiah, Daniel, and Esther. All of these books have a very similar set-up:

¹⁵² Ibid., 40-41.

the central protagonist has gained prominence in the gentile court, yet they are not corrupted by the mundane concerns of their illustrious professions. Their piety and religious fealty are portrayed as their most noble qualities. Furthermore, although the foreign rulers deign to show kindness to the Judean community, all recognition is conferred first and foremost to the deity of the Judeans. Just as in the book of Ezra, where prophecy preceded the letter to the king, in the book of Nehemiah, the protagonist's prayer is given particular attention. The subsequent granting of permission from the king is not meant to be viewed as an act of benevolence on the part of the ruler, but rather as the direct consequence of divine intervention on behalf of his people. In these books, "each account makes the doxic assumption that kings are divinely inspired – that favorable decrees have a divine origin."¹⁵³ The central theme shared by multiple postexilic books is that divinity trumps monarchy. Every positive outcome or happy ending is the direct consequence of God interceding and influencing political regimes. The "good" king is merely an executor of the divine's will.¹⁵⁴

Jacob L. Wright has also identified similarities in the redactional style of the book of Nehemiah and the book of Esther with regard to the theological nature of the texts (in spite of the latter not having mentioned the name of God). He points out that in the books of Nehemiah and Esther, the protagonists are able to achieve their objectives and to procure the required approval of the Persian authorities. However, in both cases, it is the character's ability to connect with God and to successfully secure his intervention that provided for a favorable

¹⁵³ Donna Laird, *Negotiating Power in Ezra-Nehemiah*, (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 292.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

result.¹⁵⁵ While possessing the necessary political clout is certainly important, even more crucial to the realization of Judean objectives in the Exilic period is securing a spiritual advantage. The theological elements of the text are unmistakable. The thematic similarity linking Esther, Nehemiah, and Ezra makes it clear that late biblical authors were aware of the intricate political, religious, and cultural dynamics prevalent in the exilic Judean community. On one hand, Judeans needed to establish positive relations with foreign rulers in order to secure their continuity; on the other hand, they needed to retain their religious distinctiveness and belief that God was ultimately the one who prospered them. The people in exile – torn between foreign rule and religious conviction – were in desperate need of finding a viable identity.¹⁵⁶ The book of Ezra together with other works in the exilic literary corpus reflect this tension between theology and politics. All of the books composed during the period represent a compromise: nominally recognizing the contribution of foreign monarchs to the welfare and continuity of the Judean people, while ultimately ascribing praise to God for his direct intervention. Authors use two languages to create a linguistic tension with the text, a tension that parallels the ongoing conflict between the political and religious realms of the exilic Judean community. In Ezra, language serves to highlight how Judeans navigate complex scenarios and

¹⁵⁵ Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and its Earliest Readers*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 14. Wright writes the following: “In light of this ‘hard’ textual evidence, I propose that the same redactional process that produced the amplified versions of Esther was also at work in the composition of Nehemiah 1. Just as Mordecai exploits Esther’s influence with Xerxes..., so Hanani and the group from Judah inform Artaxerxes’ loyal cupbearer of the adversity in the province. And in the latest versions of both accounts, the actions of the highly-esteemed Persian courtiers manifests that it was not just their favor with the king and his benevolence, but also their intercession with God, which brought upon the amelioration of their people’s sociopolitical plight.”

¹⁵⁶ Bob Becking, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 45.

achieve equilibrium at a time when political mandates and religious adherence were often in conflict with one another.

Rebuilding Judean Identity

Moreover, it is important to understand the demographic backdrop of the era against which the postexilic book of Ezra (as well as the supposedly contemporaneous book of Nehemiah) were composed. The authors of these books are explicitly concerned with the welfare of the Judean returnees and how they would consolidate their religious and ethnic identity in spite of ongoing external opposition. Donald P. Moffat writes in reference to the composition of Ezra that “historical factors also indicate that identity formation was an issue for the community that produced the text.”¹⁵⁷ The book of Ezra is fixated with asserting the distinctiveness of the Judean people, their religious practices, and linguistic pride in spite of the overt historical challenges and geographical disadvantages that they faced. Furthermore, the repression of the exile had inevitably led to the erosion of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Judean repatriates. Coupled with an unfavorable geographic situation and close proximity to hostile neighbors, it was critical for the authors of the book to assert Judean identity at a time when it was continually undermined. The cumulative weight of these experiences resulted in the general disenfranchisement of the Judean people, who were only loosely bound together by the collective effort to achieve cultic restoration, and even that was being threatened. The destruction of the temple as well as the institutes of the state led to not only the geographical

¹⁵⁷ Donald P. Moffat, *Ezra's Social Drama: Identity Formation, Marriage, and Social Conflict in Ezra 9 and 10*, (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 26

displacement but also the psychological disorientation of the people, and the impact would be felt for many generations. Donald Moffat writes that “the conquest of Judah...initiated several identity challenges for the survivors and subsequent generations.”¹⁵⁸ These “identity challenges” feature strongly in the book of Ezra, as authors seek to find ways to counteract the effects of the exile and to rebuild identity.

The first way that postexilic writers craft identity is by creating specific terminology to refer solely to the community of Judean returnees. These unique designations not only set the exiles apart from the surrounding gentile peoples but also from their historical predecessors in the land, creating a new chapter in the history of the Judean people and establishing them as the forerunners of a religious revival. The authors used various means to refer to the new arrivals in Jerusalem – בני הגולה (“sons of exile”), העולים משבי הגולה (“the ones rising up from the captivity of exile”). All of these appellations feature the exile as a central part of this newly constructed identity.¹⁵⁹ However, they also realized that they could capitalize on a collective trauma to give a sense of meaning and unity to otherwise disbanded individuals facing cultural loss and language attrition. All the members of this new community shared the common experience of being subject to foreign rule,¹⁶⁰ and it is this experience that serves as a unifying feature and provides them with an identity. Rather than adopting a historical revisionist approach by

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁹ Bedford “Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah,” 149.

¹⁶⁰ Holverson-Taylor, Martien A. *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 74. Holverson-Taylor argues in his monograph that the definition of exile needs to be extended to refer not only the geographical displacement of the people but their subjugation under foreign rule. Being subject to a foreign entity constitutes an important part of the exilic experience. He goes on to argue that even after the return of the Jews to Yehud, the exile is prolonged in the sense that they are still subject to outside rulers and thus cannot function independently.

attempting to erase or repress memories of the exile, the authors embrace it as a means to join the people together. The literature reflects deliberate authorial intervention in rebuilding and consolidating community ties, where the shared history of deportation and captivity gives them a new sense of meaning and self-awareness.

Moreover, a newly fostered sense of identity sets the Judean diaspora apart from the local peoples inhabiting the land, and this dichotomy is explicitly reiterated in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. Peter Bedford writes, “While it is possible to detect differences in interest and perspective among the various sources that compose Ezra-Nehemiah, the work as a whole stresses the separation of the Judeans who were repatriated from Babylonia from ‘the people(s) of the land(s)’ living in and around Judah.”¹⁶¹ The “people of the land” (עַם הָאֲרֶץ)¹⁶² mentioned throughout Ezra and Nehemiah constitutes the foil against which postexilic Judean identity is juxtaposed.

Therefore, for the postexilic Judean community in Jerusalem, the implementation of “separation” is critical, as one of the main conditions for the creation of ethnic identification is the notion of boundaries. Cultural sociologist Joanne Nagel writes that “ethnic identity is most closely associated with the issue of boundaries. Ethnic boundaries determine who is a member and who is not.”¹⁶³ Separation is a collective adoption and adherence to the social construct of boundaries, and these boundaries become manifest in manifold ways. Enforced separation from

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁶² This term is redefined in Late Biblical Hebrew, taking an expression from Standard Biblical Hebrew. Lisbeth S. Fried, “The ‘Am Ha’ares in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Administration,” 141.

¹⁶³ Joanne Nagel, “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture.” *Social Problems* 41, no. 1 (1994): 154.

foreigners is a recurring theme, appearing in Ezra chapters 9-10 and Nehemiah chapters 9, 10, and 13.¹⁶⁴ Although the Israelites had historically coexisted with foreigners, postexilic literature emphasizes the need for the Judean repatriates to completely isolate themselves in order to reinforce the notion of separateness and to fortify their sense of community. It is common for people to create geographical enclaves for themselves and live in separate locations from those deemed as “other.” This exclusivity in turn strengthens the relationship of individuals with one another, as they unite against a common adversary. Daniel Smith argues that this perception of insiders versus outsiders constituted a central feature of ethnic construction: “Ethnicity, then, is maintained by a group process. A significant dynamic of the experience of Israel in exile is their consciousness of being among ‘foreigners.’”¹⁶⁵ This awareness, which had already emerged during the exile, continued after Judean repatriation and became an important part of identity building in post-exilic Jerusalem.

Another way of strengthening group identity is by introducing linguistic division in order to exclude other speech communities. Although the postexilic Judean settlers were likely conversant and highly proficient in Aramaic, the use of Hebrew in Ezra is a direct testimony to the conscious effort to reinforce the building of Judean identity. Hebrew was perceived as a sacrosanct language used to document the religious rites and rituals of the Judeans. This was in contrast to Aramaic, which was viewed as an administrative tongue used for the purposes of communication with non-Judean entities. Linguistic separation is yet another form of what Peter Lau identifies as the “separatist policy concerning gentiles” in the books of Ezra and

¹⁶⁴ Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 93.

¹⁶⁵ Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 57.

Nehemiah.¹⁶⁶ This exclusive attitude is reinforced and disseminated by the literature produced during the time; the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah used negative portrayals of foreigners together with linguistic alternation between Hebrew and Aramaic in order to construct and assert Judean identity. These works call for the valuation and protection of Judean linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, setting them apart from surrounding nation groups and people of the land.

History of Negative Views Toward Foreigners

Bilingualism was not always a part of the experience of the Judean community. In fact, throughout most of the Iron Age, foreigners were often portrayed disparagingly, and there is no reason to assume that the languages they spoke would have been viewed favorably by the writers of the text. Evidence for this negative view toward foreigners and their languages can be found throughout the Biblical text.

For example, in Deuteronomy 28, Moses issues a series of blessings for obedience to divine ordinances ensued by a list of curses for failure to do so, with one of the curses being dominated by a foreign people whose language the Israelites will be able not comprehend at all.

יְשׂא יְהוָה עֲלֶיךָ גּוֹי מְרֻחָק מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ כְּאִשׁוֹר יִדְעָה הַנָּשֶׁר: גּוֹי, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִשְׁמַע לְשׁוֹנוֹ

¹⁶⁶ Peter H.W. Lau, “Gentile Incorporation into Israel in Ezra - Nehemiah?” *Biblica* 90, no. 3 (2009): 356. In his article, Lau discusses the generally exclusive attitude prevalent in the postexilic Jewish community and their rejection of mingling with gentiles, stating that this shows a marked contrast with the more lenient policies and “assimilationist approach” found in other books of the Bible, such as Ruth, Esther, and Chronicles. However, he mentions that in spite of this generally “separatist policy,” it was still possible for gentiles to gain some inclusion in the Jewish community by adopting religious practices and participating in the cult.

The LORD will bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as the vulture swoopeth down; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand. –

Deuteronomy 28:49

In the above passage, language features prominently in a description of an imagined cultural conflict. Upon rejection of divine principles, the Israelites will be thrust into a destructive encounter with a nation whose language they are unable to understand (גוי אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁמַע לְשׁוֹנוֹ). The negative phrase לֹא תִשְׁמַע (“will not understand”) is also used in Genesis 11 in reference to mankind not understanding each other’s languages. The notion of conquest by a foreign people is intended to evoke extreme terror and consternation, reminding the children of Israel of their dark days as slaves under a foreign ruler, yet their adversity under a nation from far away (גוי) will be even more intense due to the linguistic chaos that will accompany the invasion. Foreigners are viewed very negatively, and invasion by speakers of an incomprehensible tongue is perceived to be a severe curse.

Further evidence for the negative perceptions of foreigners and their language can be found in Isaiah 28:10-13, where their speech is mocked.

וְהָיָה לָהֶם דְּבַר-יְהוָה צוֹ לִצְוֹ צוֹ לִצְוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ זְעִיר זְעִיר זְעִיר זְעִיר - לְמַעַן יִלְכוּ וְכִשְׁלוּ אַחֲזֹר וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ וְנִקְשְׁוּ וְנִלְכְּדוּ

And so the word of the LORD is unto them precept by precept, precept by precept, line by line, line by line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken – Isaiah 28:13

The meaning of this passage is not completely clear, with many simply accepting the literal translation “precept by precept” and “line by line.” However, given the alphabetical nature and phonetic simplicity of the words צו and קו, this passage may represent an imitation and

ridiculing of foreign speech. This interpretation makes more sense when one examines the surround context and verse 11 in particular - אֶל-הַעַם הַזֶּה / “For with stammering lips and with a strange tongue shall it be spoken to this people.” Verse 13 could be viewed as a follow-up to this verse, with the author mimicking and deriding the sounds of this “strange tongue.” (לשון אחרת) The mockery of foreign phonology in Isaiah 28 is consistent with the negative portrayal of unintelligible languages in Deuteronomy 28; both reveal the underlying biases and aversion of biblical writers toward foreigners.

The book of Ezra follows other biblical works in that it displays a sort of generalized disdain and negative sentiment toward elements of a foreign nature. In Ezra, foreign entities are portrayed in a negative light. The adversaries of the fledgling Judean community in Jerusalem are members of various nation groups as well as the descendants of peoples who were forcibly resettled in the land of Samaria. Even benevolent gentiles who made crucial executive decisions allowing for the re-establishment of Judean cultic rituals are not conferred full credit for the extent of their contributions to the Judean cause. Instead, the divine is considered to be the ultimate benefactor of the Judean people. The underlying xenophobia present in early Biblical literature continues to constitute an equally powerful force during the later Biblical period. While there are notable exceptions, in general, the nation of Israel is encouraged to insulate itself from the permeation of foreign influences. This underlying xenophobia present in other examples from biblical literature (e.g Deuteronomy 28:49, Isaiah 28:10-13) continues to be an equally powerful force during the late biblical period. For example, in the prophetic books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, foreigners are labeled as temple defilers.¹⁶⁷ In many of the Minor

¹⁶⁷ Mark A. Awabady, “Yhwh Exegetes Torah: How Ezekiel 44:7—9 Bars Foreigners from the Sanctuary.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 4 (2012): 685.

Prophets as well, there exist protracted oracles explicitly condemning numerous groups of foreigners, yet the *Sitz im Leben* for many of these passages remain unclear.¹⁶⁸ All of these examples demonstrate that, while the Exile ushered in a new era where interaction between Judeans and non-Judeans became highly normalized and even necessary, the increased frequency and intensity of contact did not result in a less hostile view toward foreigners, at least from a literary standpoint.

In fact, one may argue that the perennial skepticism and anti-foreigner sentiment even becomes amplified during the postexilic period, manifesting itself more palpably in the literary production of the time. The authors found themselves in a changing reality, where Judean identity and way of life were being systematically undermined and encroached upon by foreign peoples. Ezra and Nehemiah are arguably full of literary propaganda as well as attempts to demarcate between Judean and non-Judean identities. Saul M. Olyan writes that the writers of these texts employed redactional techniques and methods to combine various anti-foreigners passages from the existing biblical corpus to create their own distilled version of purist ideology.¹⁶⁹ The goal of Biblical literature is not merely to record historical events but also to re-shape the identity of an exiled people, and the success of this enterprise is predicated highly upon the authors' ability to convince their readers of the necessity of insulating oneself and excising all non-Judean elements. Ezra and Nehemiah in particular are quite obsessed with the

¹⁶⁸ Anselm C. Hagedorn. "Looking at Foreigners in Biblical and Greek Prophecy." *Vetus Testamentum* 57, no. 4 (2007): 437.

¹⁶⁹ Saul M. Olyan, "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community." *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 35, no. 1 (2004): 1–16.

redefining of the social constructs of “self” and “other.”¹⁷⁰ Language was the primary means to separate the Judeans from their non-Judean counterparts. Therefore, while bilingualism was undeniably the new social norm of the time, the writers of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah emphasized the importance of Hebrew by using it selectively for the purposes of documenting matters of a religious nature. Coupled with this was the necessity of creating a Judean identity anchored in language, with Hebrew functioning as a sacrosanct idiom. These manifold objectives in the use of language are evidence for the power of language consciousness as an underlying force in the composition of the text.

Sociolinguistic Context of Bilingualism in the Book of Ezra in Jerusalem during the Persian Period

Bilingualism was by no means a novel phenomenon in the Ancient Near East and especially not during the Persian Period, and individuals were likely both bilingual and biliterate. Although writing is an imprecise rendering of vernacular, the discovery of various inscriptions enables us to better reconstruct the sociolinguistic dynamics of the time. Evidence of biliteracy allows us to imagine that bilingualism must have existed to some extent or another.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.1. For further discussion on the sociology of how one defines oneself against others, and how this factors into the development of ethnic identity, c.f. Daniel Glaser. “Dynamics of Ethnic Identification.” *American Sociological Review* 23, no. 1, (1958): 32. Glaser writes that it is the negative feelings that one feels when coming into contact with members of the perceived “others” group that constitutes a defining criterion in ethnic identity. Contact between various ethnic groups reinforces the sense of identity when perceiving the supposed “negative” elements in other ethnicities that are defined as “other.” Glaser writes the following: “The third component of ethnic identification patterns consists of the totality of feelings which distinguish a person's experiences in contact with other persons whom he categorizes as of a particular ethnic identity. Feelings with which we may be concerned include hostility, fear, disgust, envy, affection, respect, vague uneasiness or complete indifference (that is, the absence of affect arousal on the basis of ethnic identity.”

Long before the Judean exile and the advent of late Biblical literature, numerous bilingual inscriptions have been uncovered, testifying to the multifaceted linguistic dynamic in the region. One of the most notable examples is the Tel-Fekheriye Inscription, a statue with writing etched on the surface, rendered in both Aramaic alphabetic script and Akkadian cuneiform.¹⁷¹ In the case of this inscription – the only one of its kind – the Aramaic is believed to be the secondary language, a translation of the original Akkadian,¹⁷² testifying to the multilingual landscape of the period. Another significant discovery was the Behistun inscription, which was not bilingual but rather trilingual. Some scholars argue for a sixth century dating, which would make the inscription contemporary with the exilic or early post-exilic period in Judean history.¹⁷³ However, as in the case of the first inscription, the Behistun text – while constituting a fascinating linguistic specimen and a promising case study – is only marginally instructive in helping us to reconstruct the convoluted sociolinguistic dynamic of speech communities of this epoch. Both Tel-Fekheriye and Behistun have text in multiple

¹⁷¹ “Akkadian” is an alternative name for “Assyrian,” derived from the empire’s capital in Akkad.

¹⁷² A. R. Millard and P. Bordreuil. “A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 45, no. 3 (1982): 135–141.

¹⁷³ A. T. Olmstead, “Darius and His Behistun Inscription.” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 55, no. 4 (1938): 409.

Olmstead remarks that while the Behistun Inscription does not provide any explicit mention of dates or chronology, the integration of Biblical discourse into it allows for a more precise dating of the text to be elicited: “If the Behistun inscription gives no more dates, the Bible does, and our new study of the Behistun chronology n chronology demands a renewed discussion of the biblical data. Usually the dates are by the number, not the name of the month, but fortunately we can prove that the year began in post-Exilic Palestine with Nisan, as in Babylonia, and so we may equate the Hebrew and the Babylonian months. A much more serious question is whether the Hebrews counted the years of Darius as in Babylonia. On first thought, we should answer in the affirmative, and the second year in which most of the prophecies are dated would be 518-517.”

languages, yet these are mere literal translations of the same content. The use of additional languages does not provide new information to the reader.

However, the book of Ezra is unique, not because of the presence of two languages but because of the *way* it uses language. Unlike the aforementioned inscriptions, there is no content overlap between languages in the book of Ezra. Both the Hebrew and the Aramaic portions are integral parts of the book, and the disparate language sections coalesce to form one coherent narrative. In this way, the book of Ezra distinguishes itself in the way it employs bilingualism as a literary approach. The content is not repeated in two different tongues, but rather the languages work to build one single, internally consistent account. Within the biblical corpus, only the later book of Daniel emulates this structural scheme. Outside of biblical literature, there is no attestation of a bilingual text that alternates between two distinct idioms to tell one tale.¹⁷⁴ What the authors of Ezra have done, therefore, is unprecedented, leading readers to wonder regarding the underlying reasons for the using this literary-linguistic device.

In order to appreciate the linguistic setup of the text, it is important to understand the audience for which the text was written. Therefore, the sociolinguistic context behind the writing is equally important as the writing itself. Prior to late biblical literature, the inclusion of a second language within a text or document had a communicative purpose: to enable another speech community to understand and appreciate the message. Therefore, the content of such texts was simply duplicated in the second language, with only minor modifications and adjustments. The book of Ezra is a linguistic-literary innovation, and its content is customized for a specific intended audience. The authors of Ezra expect their readership to have full

¹⁷⁴ Berman, "The Narratological Purpose of Aramaic Prose in Ezra 4.8-6.18." 166.

proficiency in two literary idioms. Hence, the vast majority of the intended audience must have been bilingual in order to render the production of such literature to be worthwhile. Having works in two languages assumes an extremely narrow pool of potential readers. While it is indubitable that the Judean speech community was largely bilingual, the phenomenon of bilingualism is certainly more complex than simply having competency in two tongues. Bilingualism has various typologies and is far more nuanced and often the unique result of an interplay of numerous factors.¹⁷⁵ The book of Ezra was written for a particular kind of bilingual audience, for whom two languages served unequal roles in various capacities.

In order to fully understand the literary and sociological importance of bilingualism in Ezra, one must examine the sociopolitical context of the book's composition as well as the linguistic profile of the audience to which the work was directed. The Judean community in Jerusalem was small and vulnerable, having been the victims of a brutal military campaign and subsequent coerced cultural assimilation. The exile resulted in not only the geographical displacement of the people but also their linguistic subjugation. A direct consequence of this was the community shifting from being largely monolingual (as in 2 Kings 18:26) to functionally bilingual. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of bilingualism is much more complex and nuanced than simply possessing competency in two distinct linguistic registers. Before we proceed further in our discussion, it is important to be aware of the difference between bilingualism in vernacular and written language. An individual may be conversant in two

¹⁷⁵ Josiane F. Hamers and Michael H.A. Blanc, *Bilinguality and Bilingualism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2-10. In their monograph on bilingualism, Hamers and Blanc focus on the typologies of bilingualism and the underlying causes and factors. They analyze situations based on context and language contact and how the interplay of factors are responsible for various kinds of bilingualism in their final form.

languages but not necessarily be able to write or read them. However, we argue that many in the Judean speech community were also literate in both languages, especially since the Aramaic script started to be used for transcribing Hebrew during the Persian Period.¹⁷⁶ Speakers who were literate would be familiar with both the oral and written versions of the languages, and this would have likely been the target audience for the authors of Ezra.

The following section draws extensively from the realm of socio- and psycholinguistics to aid in our investigation of the book of Ezra. While the Judean community was “bilingual,” it is important to distinguish specifically what kind of bilingualism individuals would have exhibited. Bilingualism is subdivided based on the way speakers learn the second language and what effects second language acquisition has on their linguistic repertoire.

Psycholinguist Wallace E. Lambert has explicitly demarcated and defined two types opposing types of bilingualism. In actuality, there are more types of bilingualism, such as growing up in a bilingual family, yet this study will only focus on *additive* and *subtractive*. *Additive bilingualism* occurs when speakers acquire a second tongue out of necessity and practicality, thereby expanding their linguistic repertoire. However, they do so without losing or compromising their mother tongue.¹⁷⁷ Both languages are able to co-exist without the newly acquired tongue supplanting the other. Additive bilingualism as a phenomenon is characterized

¹⁷⁶ William Schniedewind, “Aramaic, the Death of Written Hebrew,” in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Culture*, ed. Seth L. Sanders, (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2006): 139. Schniedewind writes, “One gauge of the relative place of Hebrew and Aramaic is script. The Hebrew script becomes largely symbolic in the Persian Period and is largely replaced by the Aramaic script.”

¹⁷⁷ Wallace E. Lambert, "Bilingualism and Language Acquisition." *New York Academy of Sciences* 379, no.1 (1981): 9-22.

by “positive cognitive and affective outcomes of being bilingual.”¹⁷⁸ However, the counterpart of this label is *subtractive bilingualism*, where the acquisition of a second language severely threatens and endangers the continuity of the native tongue. The learned language is perceived as more useful, while the mother tongue is deemed as less important and thereby relegated to a secondary position. This type of bilingualism is most often the direct result of national and social pressure to adopt the dominant tongue, while retention of the native tongue is discouraged or even actively forbidden. Unsurprisingly, subtractive bilingualism as a phenomenon is most prevalent among linguistic minorities, as individuals without these groups feel “forced to put aside or subtract out their ethnic languages for a more necessary and prestigious national language.”¹⁷⁹ One commonly examined instance of subtractive bilingualism is the linguistic profile of bilingual children in the United States and the role of the educational system in promoting competency in English at the expense of mitigating fluency in the home languages of immigrant pupils.¹⁸⁰ While there are positive effects associated with additive bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism as a phenomenon has much more negative connotations, with Lambert going as far to deplore it as “devastating” for young people.¹⁸¹ The negative effects of subtractive bilingualism are obvious: rapid language attrition is experienced by the younger generation resulting in a severed connection to the associated cultural values. The native tongue is oftentimes disdained and perceived as inferior, leading to its complete rejection

¹⁷⁸ Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones, *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*. (Multilingual Matters, 1988): 642

¹⁷⁹ Lambert, “Bilingualism and Language Acquisition,” 12

¹⁸⁰ Alejandro Portes and Lingxin Hao. “E Pluribus Unum: Bilingualism and Loss of Language in the Second Generation.” *Sociology of Education* 71, no. 4 (1998): 269–294.

¹⁸¹ Lambert, “Bilingualism and Language Acquisition,” 12

altogether. It is considered to be low-status and worth replacing with a high-status majority tongue.¹⁸²

Lambert's taxonomy of bilingualism is instructive. Not only does it provide clear-cut subdivisions but it also demonstrates that bilingualism can be employed as a tool to measure the vitality of a speech community. While additive bilingualism poses no threats and seems to benefit interlocutors, subtractive bilingualism has more adverse effects that could prove detrimental to the continuity of a language. In fact, subtractive bilingualism may be a harbinger of eventual language death. Communities that exhibit subtractive bilingualism deal with the imminent challenge of one language disappearing due to the exerted dominion of the stronger tongue. While traditional studies on language death deal with the phenomenon as a result of language contact and change, more recent literature in the field of applied linguistics approach the topic from the lens of language acquisition and bilingualism.¹⁸³ Subtractive bilingualism indicates that while a community still has at least marginal competency in two tongues, the knowledge of one is quickly diminishing in face of external pressure. Subtractive bilingualism therefore constitutes a phase in the process of language attrition, representing the last moment in a language's existence before it is confronted with imminent death.

At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive that bilingualism could actually be a sign of incipient language loss, but further research into bilingualism shows that this is actually hardly surprising when the gradation of bilingualism is examined. Individuals on the verge of losing

¹⁸² Marguerite Malakoff and Kenji Hakuta, "Translation Skills and Metalinguistic Awareness in Bilinguals," in *Language Processing in Bilingual Children*, ed. Ellen Bialystok (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 141.

¹⁸³ Monika S. Schmid and Barbara Köpke, *First Language Attrition*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 1-2

one of their languages are not true bilinguals. Linguist Christopher Thiery argues that true bilingualism is relatively rare, as an individual must fulfill two conditions to qualify: he or she must have equal competency in both languages and must have learned or been immersed in a language environment since infancy.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, because the criteria for being a true bilingual are so stringent, most ostensibly bilingual individuals fall into some other category. Francois Grosjean criticizes the traditional view that bilinguals are single individuals with the same skillsets as two monolinguals. Furthermore, he argues and that individuals who do not fulfill the aforementioned criteria of “true bilinguals” should be re-classified in other categories.¹⁸⁵ By this definition, it is unequivocal that individuals who experience subtractive bilingualism most certainly do not qualify as true bilinguals; in fact, they are marginally bilingual if one can even apply the term to describe them. Such was certainly the case with the postexilic Judeans in Jerusalem. The community was comprised entirely of individuals who had been immersed in a different linguistic environment for an extended period of time. Joshua Berman extrapolates

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Thiery, “True Bilingualism and Second-Language Learning,” in *Language Interpretation and Communication*, ed. David Gerver and H. Wallace Sinaiko, (New York: Plenum Press, 2013), 145-154.

¹⁸⁵ Francois Grosjean, “Neurolinguists, Beware! The Bilingual is not Two Monolinguals in One Person,” *Brain and Language* 36 (1989): 4.

Grosjean writes that individuals who fall short of possessing equal capacity in two languages do not qualify as true bilinguals and can be reclassified in a number of ways. He also proposes the labels of “indeterminate” and “less bilingual.” Bilingualism is therefore a spectrum, with the ideal being an individual who has equal knowledge and grasp of the two languages. Those who fall short can be classified in other ways. Grosjean writes the following: “The ‘real’ bilingual is seen as the person who is equally and fully fluent in two languages; he or she is the “ideal,” the “true,” the “balanced,” the “perfect” bilingual (see Bloomfield, 1933; Thiery, 1978). All the others, who in fact represent the vast majority of people who use two languages in their everyday lives, are “not really” bilingual or are “special types” of bilinguals; hence the numerous qualifiers found in the literature: ‘dominant,’ ‘unbalanced,’ ‘semilingual,’ ‘alingual,’ etc. This search for the ‘true’ bilingual has used traditional language tests as well as psycholinguistic tests which are constructed around the notion of ‘balance’; invariably the ‘ideal’ bilinguals are the ones who do as well in one language as in the other. All others are somehow ‘less bilingual’ and are put into an indeterminate category.”

data from sociolinguists and argues that the Judean speech community during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah constitutes an example of *subtractive bilingualism*.¹⁸⁶ Under the constant influence of Aramaic, it is inevitable that the function and usefulness of Hebrew was significantly diminished. Even though Hebrew was retained, its role was severely restricted – it no longer served as the language for all purposes and communications. The Judean returnees in Jerusalem who were ostensibly “bilingual” likely had serious deficits in their knowledge of Hebrew and were by no means true bilinguals. By the time of their resettlement in Jerusalem, a large number of the exiles had already entered the stage of subtractive bilingualism, portending a downward trend and deterioration of the linguistic integrity of the community.

During the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, the Judean settlement in Jerusalem was not only facing an external threat but also an unexpected internal one as well. The small community was surrounded by adversarial and hostile neighbors on all four sides,¹⁸⁷ making their geographical location a volatile hotspot for interethnic friction. As the book of Ezra indicates from the inclusion of Aramaic bureaucratic documents, these peoples living within the same region were vehemently opposed to Judean efforts to reconstruct the Temple and revive the cult. To maintain and assert their religious, ethnic, and linguistic identity at such a time was certainly no easy feat. However, to further exacerbate an already unfavorable situation, the community dealt with imminent challenges from within. The community was comprised of individuals who had

¹⁸⁶ Berman, “The Narratological Purpose of Aramaic Prose in Ezra 4.8-6.18,” 167.

¹⁸⁷ Israel Finkelstein. “Nehemiah’s Adversaries.” in *Hasmonean Realities behind Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives, Society of Biblical Literature*, (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 71–82. Finkelstein refers to the geographical situation of the Jews and surrounding peoples as “enemies roundabout,” writing that “the Judeans were concerned with their neighbors on all sides; in fact, this was the time on conflict on all fronts.”

borne the blunt of a brutal exile, during which cultural assimilation had become the norm and even a requisite for survival. Furthermore, all the conditions identified by linguists to be contributing factors leading to subtractive bilingualism can be observed in the postexilic Judean community. Lambert defines subtractive bilingualism as something “experienced by ethnolinguistic minority groups who, because of national educational policies and social pressures of various sorts, feel forced to put aside or subtract out their ethnic languages for a more necessary and prestigious national language.”¹⁸⁸ This description aligns almost perfectly with the experiences and collective trauma of the Judean community in exile during the late biblical period.

Writers of the time were keenly aware of the reality of subtractive bilingualism as a characterizing feature of the restored Judean community in Jerusalem. In their works, they acknowledge the likelihood of imminent linguistic attrition, as overall knowledge of Hebrew had waned significantly with the advent of Aramaic. For the influx of returnees from exile, subtractive bilingualism was not only a prevalent phenomenon but also likely the new norm. Subjected to the aforementioned social pressures, it is hardly surprising that the retention of Hebrew was greatly affected by the linguistic hegemony of Aramaic. Based on Nehemiah 8:8, Joseph Naveh opines that the majority of the returned exiles no longer spoke Hebrew as a native tongue and that Aramaic was certainly the dominant and preferred language for the purposes of communication.¹⁸⁹ While it is impossible to ascertain the precise level of proficiency within the Judean community in each respective language, it is indisputable that by

¹⁸⁸ Lambert, “Bilingualism and Language Acquisition,” 12.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Naveh, “Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W.D. Davies, L. Finkelstein (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984), 119.

this point in time, Aramaic had far outpaced Hebrew as the primary tongue of most of the people. Biblical writers do not deny this new linguistic reality. The fact that both Daniel and Ezra are composed in a mix of two idioms already testifies to the acknowledgement of subtractive bilingualism as a characteristic feature of the sociolinguistic profile of the Judean community in the post-Babylonian epoch. Ezra does not venture to completely rewrite history, but rather it presents a relatively accurate reality of the era in which it is set. The use of two languages to form one coherent narrative is customized to the needs of a subtractive bilingual audience. One can argue that the bilingual setup of the book reflects and even conforms to the linguistic reality of the community depicted. Although each language had its own distinct purpose for the Judeans in Jerusalem, both idioms were necessary to cover all aspects of life, with Aramaic likely enjoying a discernible advantage.

Nonetheless, while Biblical authors do acknowledge subtractive bilingualism as a permanent fixture in the experience of postexilic Judeans, it is unequivocal that the issue still remained highly contentious and was a source of significant distress to those who wished to advance a purist ideology. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, this purist ideology is visible in the form of identifiable “rhetoric of purity and pollution.”¹⁹⁰ This dichotomy can also be seen in the Judean linguistic profile, with Hebrew occupying an ideologically superior position to Aramaic as it constitutes a “purer” Judean language. Writers were rightfully concerned with its preservation and were wary of circumstances that would accelerate its decline. Furthermore, as linguistic studies of modern languages have demonstrated, subtractive bilingualism is a

¹⁹⁰ Olyan, “Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community,” 2.

harbinger of eventual language disappearance.¹⁹¹ This postexilic linguistic situation was worrisome, as the pervasiveness of subtractive bilingualism in the fledgling Judean community constituted a direct threat to the goal of establishing unity and solidarity within the newly founded Judean community. Their writings are an explicit attempt to address these issues and to counteract this potential threat. The first way to address the perceived problem of subtractive bilingualism is to draw the readers' attention to it. The writers do not want to normalize this condition; to the contrary, they wish to point out its negative effects and to demonstrate how this phenomenon could potentially undermine the ongoing attempt to rebuild a sense of national identity. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah explicitly bring up the topic of language disuse and the severe implications for the successful reconstruction and continuity of a postexilic Judean identity.

An implicit mention of the ongoing phenomenon of subtractive bilingualism and concomitant language shift comes from Nehemiah 8:8. After the successful rebuilding of the Temple, the Judean community embarks on the reestablishment of cultic rituals and the resumption of religious observation and practices. A crucial component of the attempted spiritual revival is the reading of the law to the people.

וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מִפֶּרֶשׁ וְשׁוֹם שְׂכָל נִיבְיָנוּ בְּמִקְרָא. – נחמיה 8:8

And they read in the book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. – Nehemiah 8:8

¹⁹¹ Dmitri Priven, "Grievability of First Language Loss: Towards a Reconceptualisation of European minority Language Education Practices." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no.1 (2008): 99

However, this was no ordinary reading of the law; it was not merely some customary ritual, but rather it was an essential part of the cultic revival in Jerusalem. In fact, it is important to note that the emphasis is on the process of reading into the ears of the congregation rather than on the text itself.¹⁹² Therefore, this reading was more rigorous and complex than a mere oral formality. Reading the law required the full engagement of the audience and their unequivocal comprehension of the content. According to the book of Nehemiah, explication was a necessary part of the process in order for people to understand the text (וַיְבִינּוּ בְּמִקְרָא) – *they caused them to understand the reading*). It was not merely a verbatim recitation of words written in a text; explanation of meaning and clarification were likewise important in order to ensure that the people were aware of the tenets and doctrines.

The reading of the law in Nehemiah 8:8 constituted a critical aspect of cultic restoration, and the success of the entire endeavor was predicated on the audience's ability to comprehend, acknowledge, and accept the stipulated terms and conditions delineated in the law. However, the description of the scene in Nehemiah adds yet another layer of complication to an already multifaceted religious rite. The text employs the term *meforaš* (מפרש) to describe how the reading was conducted. There has been debate regarding the precise meaning of this Hebrew term, with some scholars coming to the conclusion that this term simply functions as an adverb

¹⁹² Sara Japhet. "The Ritual of Reading Scripture (Nehemiah 8:1-12)." *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* (2013): 175-190.

Japhet writes the following on p.35:

"מוקד האירוע הוא דברי הספר הנקראים באוזני הקהל ולא הספר עצמו כאובייקט של הפולחן"

qualifying the process of reading, bearing the meaning of “distinctly.”¹⁹³ However, it seems that this word is taken from the Aramaic *mparaš*, derived “from the language of Achaemenid chancery.”¹⁹⁴ The Aramaic equivalent also appears in Ezra 4:18.

בְּשִׁתְּוֵנָא דִּי נְשַׁלְחָתוֹן עֲלֵינָא--מְפָרֵשׁ קָרִי קֹדְמִי

The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me – Ezra 4:18

On the basis of the appearance of מְפָרֵשׁ (*mparaš*) in Aramaic Ezra, Joachim Schaper argues that the Levites had to play the role of interpreters during the reading of scripture in Nehemiah, as the people no longer possessed enough competency in Hebrew to understand scripture without assistance. In reference to Nehemiah 8, she writes the following:

The author of this verse seems to assume that those present to listen to the reading of the law did not know enough Hebrew to comprehend what they were told. This is why the Levites had to interpret what is being read: the term *mparaš* refers to the translation of a document... Thus, the Levites in Nehemiah 8:8 are depicted as interpreters.¹⁹⁵

Based on our awareness of the prevalence of subtractive bilingualism in the postexilic Judean community in Jerusalem, it would hardly be surprising that the Hebrew language would have become less intelligible to many individuals and that there would have been a general preference for Aramaic as a means of communication.

¹⁹³ Innocent Himbaza. “La tradition du Targum en Néhémie 8, 1-8.” *Études théologiques et religieuses* 81, no. 4 (2006): 543-552. C.f. also J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah, A Commentary*, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1988), 283, 288. Himbaza writes, “alors que la majorité des chercheurs actuels pensent plutôt que ce mot qualifie la lecture et qu’il devrait être rendu, comme un adverbe, par distinctement.”

¹⁹⁴ Joachim Schaper, “Hebrew and its Study in the Persian Period,” in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda*, ed. William Horbury, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999): 15.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

When we evaluate the sociolinguistic context surrounding the use of Hebrew in Jerusalem during the Persian Period, Schaper's argument seems cogent. Therefore, we propose that *מִפְרָשׁ* as a term should contain the implication of translation being part of the reading process, in spite of views to the contrary.¹⁹⁶ Given the import of this religious rite and the necessity of full communal engagement, it would be logical that some kind of translation to Aramaic took place in order to render the text of the law unequivocal to the ears of individuals with a weakening level of Hebrew. Reading the law would have therefore been a tripartite exercise, comprised of reading, translation, and explaining. All of this effort would have been considered essential for the purposes of unifying and equipping the community with unambiguous knowledge of religious doctrine. *Meforaš* connoting "translation" is a view commonly found in Judean tradition.¹⁹⁷ This is also the view that Joseph Naveh espouses in his article, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period," in which he believes that the word *meforaš* attests to the need for translation due to the complex linguistic situation of the Achaemenid Empire. Furthermore, Naveh writes that this instance from the book of Nehemiah serves as evidence of "the widespread use of Aramaic among the Jews of Jerusalem."¹⁹⁸ Some scholars have gone as far as to propose that the use of the term *meforaš* – originally a loanword from Aramaic court language – is indicative of the beginnings of the *targumic* tradition.¹⁹⁹ This

¹⁹⁶ Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 116.

¹⁹⁷ A. van Derkooij, "Nehemiah 8 :8 and the Question of the "Targum-Tradition," in *Tradition of the Text. Studies Offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday*, ed. G. Norton and S. Pisano (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 79-90.

¹⁹⁸ Naveh, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period," 119.

¹⁹⁹ Geert Johan Venema, *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 9-10, 31, 2 Kings 22-23, Jeremiah 36, Nehemiah 8*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99.

would make the reading of the Torah by Nehemiah a watershed moment in the history of Judean translations of the Tanakh. This view can actually be found in the Talmud,²⁰⁰ although there is some debate surrounding the issue. Nonetheless, given the extensive debate surrounding the notion of translation being part of the Torah reading rite in Nehemiah 8:8, one should consider it at the very least a possibility.

Translating to Aramaic would not have been surprising given what we know about the linguistic dynamics of the community of the time. With subtractive bilingualism a common feature of the Judean sociolinguistic profile, the general level of Hebrew competency and fluency would certainly not have been comparable to Aramaic, the language in which the vast majority of the exiles had been educated. While the precise etymology and definition of *meforaš* remains contentious, what cannot be disputed is the shifting linguistic landscape, with Judeans showing signs of cultural and linguistic attrition due to decades of externally imposed policies to homogenize the exiled population. Hence, it would not be unreasonable to presume that the inaugural reading of the Torah would have been accompanied by some kind of translation and exposition in order to render the text understandable for people attempting to reconnect with their religion, culture, and language. By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, bilingualism had become a typical phenomenon for the Judean settlers in Yehud. Although subtractive bilingualism is depicted negatively in modern linguistic literature, Lisa Cleath argues that “bilingualism is not portrayed as problematic or divisive within the community.”²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 99

²⁰¹ Lisa Joann Cleath, *Reading Ceremonies in the Hebrew Bible: Ideologies of Textual Authority in Joshua 8, 2 Kings 22-23, and Nehemiah 8*. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2016), 285.

Subtractive bilingualism came to characterize the Judean speech community, with Hebrew being less widely understood yet still occupying an important position as a liturgical language.

Bilingualism: The Affiliation of Ethnicity with Language

The purist ideology prevalent in Ezra-Nehemiah is clearly visible from the demarcation of ethnic and linguistic boundaries. A central defining characteristic of ethnicity is language; thus, we see a significant amount of overlap between the concept of speech community and ethnic belonging. Although the linguistic landscape of the Achaemenid Near East was highly diverse, the narratives of Ezra-Nehemiah present a simplified version, introducing a parallel ethno-linguistic dichotomy, where two distinct entities are juxtaposed, each one categorized by a unique ethnic and linguistic label. On the one side are the Judean repatriates from Babylon, whose supposed mother tongue is Hebrew. On the other side are the “people of the land” (עַם הָאָרֶץ), who are affiliated with the Aramaic language. Argued by some scholars to originally mean “lords of the land,”²⁰² the term quickly acquired a negative connotation by the late biblical period, as these individuals became the subject of prophetic reproach and priestly indignation. עַם הָאָרֶץ - originally the title of a political group (i.e., “landed gentry”). עַם originally meant “clan,” referring to the groups that wielded political power. However, this term became more literally interpreted in Late Biblical Hebrew as well as Rabbinical Hebrew.

Although the term “people of the land” is rather general and bears inconsistent meanings throughout the Hebrew Bible, it emerges as a marker for identifying outsiders and associated

²⁰² John Tracy Thames Jr., “A New Discussion of the Meaning of the Phrase ‘am hā’āreš in the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no.1 (2011): 111

with the enemies of Judah (צרי יהודה).²⁰³ This is significant for the purposes of understanding the conceptualization of identity during this period. While it does not refer to one specific race or group of people, the term עם הארץ represents an ethnic generalization, where all non-Judean individuals sharing a common geographic area are indiscriminately lumped into this macro-category. All persons classified under the broad label עם הארץ inevitably differed in terms of culture, heritage, and allegiance, yet the common unifying factor was that they differed linguistically from the Judean speech community. For the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah, language is the key criteria for distinguishing groups of people from one another.

The juxtaposition between the two groups and the languages they speak is quite explicit within the text. In Ezra 4:8, the transition to Aramaic takes place immediately after the names of the foreign antagonists have been introduced. This creates the association between ethnicity and language, with individuals hostile to the community depicted as Aramaic speakers.

ובימי ארתחששתא כתב בשלם מתרדת טבאל ושאר כנותרו על-ארמחששתא, מלך פרס; וכתב הנשתנון כתוב
 ארמית ומתרגם ארמית

And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Aramaic character, and set forth in the Aramaic tongue – Ezra 4:8

The main antagonists are introduced by name: Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel. They vehemently oppose the community's desire to rebuild the temple and, according to the text, they hoped to hinder the implementation of this project (v.6 – לְהַפְרֵ עֲצָתָם – “to frustrate their purpose”). They wished to undermine going efforts by writing a complaint to the king regarding the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem (כְּתָבוּ שְׁטָנָה עַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְהוּדָה וְיְרוּשָׁלַם). The authors of Ezra

²⁰³ Ibid., 116.

emphasize that the language of this complaint was Aramaic, repeating this fact twice within the same verse. According to Ezra 4:8, the letter was “written in the Aramaic character” (כְּתוּב בְּאֲרָמִית) as well as “set forth in the Aramaic tongue” (מְתֻרְגָּם בְּאֲרָמִית). At this point, the text switches to Aramaic altogether, making the connection clear to the readers: Aramaic is the language of foreigners who are hostile to the exiles. These Aramaic-speaking foreigners had been given different appellations such as צָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵימִין (“the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin”) in verse 1 and עַם הָאָרֶץ (“people of the land”) in verse 4.²⁰⁴ By conferring them these labels shortly before switching to Aramaic, the writers of the text wished to emphasize the linguistic and ethnic separation between the exiles and the surrounding peoples. William Schniedewind writes the following, “The ‘peoples of the lands’ may speak their own languages, but for Ezra, the people of Judah must speak Hebrew.”²⁰⁵ The distinction between the languages is meant to parallel the separation between Judeans and adjacent non-Judean peoples. This is highly reflective of the purist ideology and notions of separateness held and perpetuated by writers of the text, who hoped that these exclusive notions would allow for the rapid consolidation of Judean identity.

In reality, however, the situation was much more complicated. The criteria for ethno-linguistic consideration laid out in Ezra-Nehemiah were merely the ideal standard of what it meant to be Judean. These standards would prove difficult to implement, as notions of

²⁰⁴ For further discussion regarding the identity of the עַם הָאָרֶץ in Ezra 4:4, see Lisbeth S. Fried, “The ‘Am Ha’ares in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Administration.” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. ed. Lipschitz, Oded and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 123-146. Fried believes that the עַם הָאָרֶץ mentioned in verse 4 is actually an appellation for the “satrapal officials who administered the government of Beyond the River.” (141).

²⁰⁵ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 156.

unadulterated ethnicity and linguistic purity only existed in the minds of the authors; in essence, their approach was highly prescriptivist, as they dictated what they believed should be the conventions for defining ethno-linguistic identity during this period. Schniedewind writes, “It seems reasonable to infer that speaking Hebrew was deemed by the religious and political leaders to be part of living in the land of the ancestors.”²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, decades of captivity, intermingling, and cultural assimilation made it extremely difficult for the new arrivals to fully extricate themselves from supposedly “foreign” or “non-Judean” influences. One of the perceived threats to the implementation of this ideology of separateness and exclusivity was widespread intermarriage with local peoples, a social phenomenon which had the potential to undermine the integrity of the community from within.

The Problem of Linguistic Intermarriage within Ezra-Nehemiah

The prevalence of intermarriage between the Judean people and the surrounding nations was problematic on many levels. On the most obvious front, such conduct constituted an explicit violation of the religious ordinances outlined in Deuteronomy 7:3, which encourage endogamy. However, the prohibition on intermarriage is made much more explicit and enforced more stringently in Ezra-Nehemiah than in earlier Biblical literature. As Christine Hayes points out, in the Torah intermarriage was reprehensible because it could potentially lead to the Israelites going astray and engaging in immoral practices. However, a new rationale based on the notion of purity was created to justify the prohibition: Judean seed must not be profaned or

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 156.

contaminated by the gentiles.²⁰⁷ This partially explains the fixation and rigid stance of the books toward the issue. However, even more important is that intermarriage results in the erosion of the cultural values the leaders of the Judean community hoped to instill in its members. As mentioned previously, the writers of Ezra-Nehemiah had an underlying agenda to dictate what constitutes the defining criteria of postexilic Judean identity. The ongoing movement to rebuild the Temple and revive the cult is accompanied by a familiarization with the core tenets of Judean faith, the reestablishment of old traditions, as well as the linguistic reconstitution of the community. In the collective attempt to recover from a national trauma and to rebuild identity, language serves as a critical driving force. However, intermarriage with local peoples challenges the endeavor to achieve linguistic autonomy. Nehemiah deplors this dreadful state of affairs, agitated by the gravity of the situation and its latent perils. At the heart of the issue is the ongoing linguistic attrition that is being witnessed in the next generation as a result of these interethnic marriages.

גם בימים ההם ראיתי את-היהודים השיבו נשים אשדודיות (אשדודיות), עמוניות (עמנויות), מואביות. ובניהם, קצי מדבר אשדודית, ואינם מכירים, לדבר יהודית--וכלשון, עם ועם.

In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. – Nehemiah 13:23-24

Nehemiah then begins to berate the people for having engaged in such practices, citing King Solomon and his going astray as a primary example of the negative consequences of foreign marriages. Remarkably, however, the pre-exilic Biblical text appears to be quite ambivalent to Solomon being involved with foreign women and does not express explicit condemnation or

²⁰⁷ Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68

disapproval of his marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh.²⁰⁸ In fact, throughout much of the Bible, the prohibition against intermarriage is not consistently enforced, nor is the act always necessarily deemed reprehensible by the authors of the text, with many frequently turning a blind eye to these occurrences. Cohen writes, “Apart from 1 Kings 11:1-10, clear and explicit opposition to intermarriage in the works of the Deuteronomist appears only in Judges 3:5-6.”²⁰⁹ In fact, with a holistic overview of the biblical text, the text may even appear to be self-contradictory, only sporadically voicing reproach, while making exceptions for individuals and families portrayed as pious (such as Joseph, Boaz and Ruth, and Rahab) regardless of their marriage’s legitimacy under Deuteronomic law. Moreover, within the Bible, the ban on intermarriage has nothing to do with the concept of ritual purity.²¹⁰ Therefore, this leads us to the question: why was Nehemiah so outraged upon discovering that the people had widely engaged in intermarriage? The magnitude of his adverse reaction cannot entirely be the result of hoping to maintain spiritual purity (although this was likely a factor). Nehemiah’s consternation was perhaps also a result of his fear of losing the Hebrew language. Seeing that the children of the exiles being ethnically mixed and unable to speak Hebrew, he becomes enraged with the people. By intermarrying, these individuals have violated the ethnic, religious, and linguistic purity of the community. The loss of Hebrew in the next generation constitutes a reason for grave concern.

וּבְנֵיהֶם חָצִי מִדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּוְדִית וְאִינָם מְפִירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית--וְכִלְשׁוֹן עִם וְעַם. וְאָרִיב עִמָּם וְאֶקְלֶלֶם וְאֶפְהֶ מֵהֶם
 אֲנָשִׁים וְאֶמְרָטָם וְאֶשְׁבִּיעַם בְּאֱלֹהִים.

²⁰⁸ Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh: Intermarriage, Conversion, and the Impurity of Women,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1987): 23-37.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹⁰ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 68.

and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Judean language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God – Nehemiah 13:24-25

Therefore, while the general Biblical view regarding intermarriage has been highly variable, oscillating from explicit reprehension to silent acquiescence, in the book of Nehemiah, this entire affair is portrayed as a nefarious event, primarily due to its potential to undermine the linguistic integrity of the new Judean settlement in Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, Nehemiah’s fears and caution are not unwarranted. Interethnic marriages and the progeny resulting from these unions do empirically lead to greater chances of linguistic attrition. Using a contemporary data set, sociologist Gillian Stevens has investigated the issue profoundly and has even derived new terminology to more accurately describe the process of partial or total second language loss in the offspring of mixed marriages, referring to these unions as cases of “linguistic intermarriage,”²¹¹ where both members involved have disparate language backgrounds. Conversely, the opposite of this – where an individual displays a clear preference for a conjugal connection with a member of the same speech community – is known as “linguistic homogamy.”²¹² This is arguably a subset or subcategory within the phenomenon of ethnic endogamy, which allows for the survival and conveyance of an ethnic group’s values, customs, and practices beyond the current generation, perpetuating “ethnic descent groups as

²¹¹ Gillian Stevens and Robert Schoen. “Linguistic Intermarriage in the United States.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50, no. 1 (1988): 267.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 267.

viable social entities.”²¹³ In essence, both linguistic homogamy and ethnic endogamy are means to ensure the continuity of the critical elements that render a group of people distinct. When individuals choose to depart from these models, the inevitable consequence is the possibility of real loss of the cultural values and customs deemed important for the self-definition of the group. However, according to Stevens, linguistic intermarriage is even more precarious and jeopardizes the embracing of identity for the following generation even more than ethnic intermarriage. According to United States census results, descendants of mixed-ethnic marriages are more apt to acknowledge their dual heritage,²¹⁴ allowing at least nominal retention of identity.

In contrast, the effects of linguistic intermarriage are more extreme in that there is less probability of achieving any sort of dual or partial preservation of identity. In the United States, the children of such unions rarely inherit the non-English idiom, leading to the total and utter disappearance of the language within a single generation. Stevens writes, “Linguistic intermarriage is more likely to identify a contemporary instance of group disaffiliation than is ethnic intermarriage, and the effect on the next generation is much more likely to be final.”²¹⁵ Therefore, while language and ethnicity are highly linked, sociological data reveals that while the label of ethnicity can still be freely applied in future descendants, language is invariably more difficult to retain and to transmit to the next generation when devoid of the proper

²¹³ Gllian Stevens and Gray Swicegood. “The Linguistic Context of Ethnic Endogamy.” *American Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (1987): 73

²¹⁴ Lieberson S. and Mary Waters, “Ethnic Mixtures in the United States.” *Sociology and Social Research* 70 (1985): 43-52

²¹⁵ Stevens and Schoen. “Linguistic Intermarriage in the United States,” 268

environment and domestic conditions. The children's loss of a minority language in favor of adopting English is referred to a mother-tongue shift,²¹⁶ as what was once the mother tongue of one of the parents has completely vanished within a single generation. As demonstrated by sociological studies, the effects of linguistic intermarriage are profound and quite astounding, as the disappearance of the non-dominant language occurs rapidly and leaves little trace of the original linguistic diversity that existed within the family structure. However, it is important to note that while linguistic intermarriage has been cited as a reason for rapid language attrition, there are numerous exceptions and variation across speech communities. Some communities are able to maintain multilingualism in spite of these challenges. It is less certain if the Judean community was able to do so. Textual evidence from late Biblical literature seems to demonstrate otherwise.

For instance, Nehemiah seems to deplore intermarriage as a social phenomenon because it represents a possible erasure of the linguistic heritage of the people. This is the most incipient danger and pressing threat, surpassing even the peril of loss of ethnic identification or religious assimilation. In fact, language is the primary link preserving the affiliation with Judaism and the idea of Judean nationhood. As argued previously, the Hebrew language is featured as the crux of the newly redefined construct of Jewishness in postexilic times. The mother language constitutes the anchor of ethnic identification, and its elimination therefore would result in a serious disruption to the perpetuation of this identity. From a sociological perspective, "mother-tongue shift is a direct indicator of acculturation,"²¹⁷ explaining the

²¹⁶ Gillian Stevens. "Nativity, Intermarriage, and Mother-Tongue Shift." *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 1, (1985): 75

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.74

intense consternation that Nehemiah felt when witnessing the lack of Hebrew proficiency in the next generation. With the death of the language comes the discontinuation of the practices, norms, and values that leaders of the Jerusalem Judean community had worked so hard to instill. If language loss is seen as a symptom of impending cultural disintegration, we can understand Nehemiah's infuriation and harsh rebuke of those who had engaged in the practice of intermarriage. Linguistic intermarriage between Judeans and non-Hebrew speakers represented an imminent threat to the collective effort to restore and rebuild Judean identity during the postexilic period.

This also better explains the ostensible discrepancy within the biblical text regarding the reception of interethnic marriages, where the text has oscillated from being vehemently opposed (as in the book of Nehemiah) to quietly tolerating or even accepting it (as in the case of Ruth, Rahab, and Uriah the Hittite). This glaring disparity has to do with the different contexts in which the said intermarriages took place. In the case of Nehemiah, the Judean community had only recently re-congregated and reestablished themselves in Jerusalem after surviving the turmoil and collective trauma of expulsion, deportation, and forced acculturation at the hands of the Babylonian. After decades in captivity, the Judean psyche was greatly debilitated. In addition, as a minority surrounded by hostile nations, they were in an innately vulnerable position – their reconstructed identity had to be actively promulgated and defended in order to secure its continuity. Any further attacks to this already fragile community could prove to be catastrophic, and linguistic intermarriage had the obvious potential to undermine the ethnolinguistic solidarity of recently rebuilt community. When witnessing the prevalence of intermarriage, Nehemiah was fully aware of the linguistic evolution that had taken place in

Judea, where Yehudit no longer served as the primary spoken language.²¹⁸ Therefore, Late Biblical literature openly condemns intermarriage because it truly is a direct threat and present danger. Conversely, in pre-exilic literature, the Judeans/Israelites were an autonomous people and the majority of the population were in their own land. The situation was reversed, as non-Hebrew speaking minorities were more likely to integrate eventually into the mainstream culture. Therefore, marriages with members of these marginalized communities were not perceived to be a serious threat, as foreigners could potentially be acculturated. During the existence of Israel as an independent nation, “it seems possible that, on the individual level at least, total assimilation might indeed occur over several generations, as children grew up and married Israelites.”²¹⁹ In essence, by virtue of having a state and political autonomy, the pre-exilic Israelite community had less to fear with regards to being culturally assimilated. In fact, the reverse was expected – that the foreigners who intermarried with Israelite men or women would slowly become incorporated into the greater community. The pre-exilic Israelites enjoyed distinct political advantages and cultural privileges when compared to their post-exilic counterparts, who had to struggle to assert their identity. Therefore, the inconsistent view of the Bible regarding intermarriage can be attributed to contextual reasons and the increased vulnerability of the Judean community after the exile. It is in Ezra-Nehemiah that “a partial biblical ban on intermarriage gives way to a universal ban.”²²⁰ As a defense mechanism against

²¹⁸ Ingo Kottsieper, “‘And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit:’ On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era.” In *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* ed. Oded Lipschitz, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 99.

²¹⁹ Joel Kaminsky. "A Light to the Nations: Was There Mission and or Conversion in the Hebrew Bible." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16, no.1 (2009): 6-22.

²²⁰ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 26-27.

any further attacks on their identity, the writers of Ezra-Nehemiah forbid anything that has the potential to encroach on the ideas of ethnic and linguistic purity.

The Use “Yehudit” as an Appellation for Hebrew and a Sign of Language Consciousness

The denouncement of mixed marriages in the Nehemiah 13 is also interesting for the purposes of further investigating language consciousness as a pervasive phenomenon in postexilic literature. The text explicitly states that the offspring did not understand the Judean language (וְאַיִנָם מִכִּרְיִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית), and this was the primary source of grief and distress for the community leader. In lieu of Yehudit (יְהוּדִית), the local languages of the surrounding peoples were spoken, including Ashdodite. This is an exegetically and historically significant passage because the language is actually given a unique appellation – *Yehudit*. In fact, this is the only way “Hebrew” is ever mentioned by name in the Biblical corpus, as the term *ʿIbrīt* is never used.²²¹

This verse from Nehemiah is only one of two instances in the Hebrew Bible (the other being 2 Kings 18:26) when the idiom of the Judeans is given a unique name and associated with national identity.²²² In a way, this marks a watershed moment in the sociolinguistic history of the Judean people and it reinforces the difference between speakers of *Yehudit* and interlocutors of other languages, a separation introduced previously in 2 Kings 18:26.

²²¹ John Huehnergahrd and Jo Ann Hackett, “The Hebrew and Aramaic Languages,” in *The Biblical World: Volume 2*, ed. John Barton (Routledge: London, 2004), 7

²²² Seth Schwartz, “Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine.” *Past & Present*, no. 148 (1995): 8. Regarding the designations used to refer to Hebrew, Schwarz writes the following: “There is in the entire Hebrew Bible a single passage in which Hebrew now for the first time identified as a language separate from its neighbours (“Judahite”) is definitely associated with Israelite identity (Neh. 13:23-30).”

דַּבֵּר נָא אֵל עֲבָדֶיךָ אַרְמִית כִּי שְׁמָעִים אֲנִינּוּ וְאֵל תְּדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ יְהוּדִית בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עַל הַחֹמָה.

Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Aramean language; for we understand it; and speak not with us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

2 Kings 18:26

The verse cited above shows the separation of the two speech communities – *Yehudit*, on the one side, and *Aramit* (Aramaic) on the other side. At the time, Aramaic was not commonly understood outside of the Judean elite; however, by the time of Nehemiah, this had changed significantly. Nonetheless, speaking *Yehudit* was still considered important for the purposes of political and national autonomy.

Furthermore, the term used to refer to the language has interesting semantic implications. *Yehudit* is derived directly from an ethnic demonym; originally, the term refers to individuals who claim ancestry from a specific group of people who inhabit a particular geographical space. In the book of Nehemiah, this ethnic label is extrapolated to refer to the language that these people speak. The decision to name the language of the Judeans is an unprecedented move on the part of the Biblical authors that represents one of the pinnacles of language consciousness in the text. The text is self-aware at this moment, conscious of the differences in oral vernaculars and how groups of people are separated by the languages they speak. Furthermore, with the innovation of the name *Yehudit* to designate what we now call Hebrew comes the crystallization of the affinity between land, ethnicity, and language. William Schniedewind remarks on the inextricable interweaving of these three aspects and their importance in the formation of Judean identity, writing the following, “I wish to emphasize the linguistic connection between *yhwdy*, *yhw dh*, and *yhw dyt* – that is, the terms used for people,

land, and language.”²²³ All three are bound up together. Postexilic Biblical writers wish to present the three as interconnected and as critical elements in the formation and preservation of Judean identity in postexilic times.

It is no mistake that the book of Ezra was composed in two distinct idioms. The existence of two languages in the text to form one coherent narrative is the product of meticulous planning and strategic implementation on the part of the authors. Bilingualism within the text serves as crucial evidence of language consciousness. The book of Ezra together with the related work of Nehemiah were composed during a period of communal disorientation and linguistic dissonance, brought on by decades of captivity and subjugation to foreign rule. The Judeans were desperate to regain not only a geographic foothold in the land but also hoped to achieve religious restoration and cultural prosperity. Nevertheless, they were devoid of a strong sense of group identity. Therefore, the writers of the text took it upon themselves to redefine the criteria of Judean identity, and language served as the paramount aspect of this process. The use and retention of Hebrew were vital for this cause, even though many Judeans had transitioned to Aramaic during the exile. Hebrew is used in conjunction with Aramaic in order to represent the ongoing tension between two conflicting sides – the Hebrew-speaking Judean community seeking a spiritual revival and their Aramaic-speaking adversaries who vehemently opposed their cause. The contrast between Hebrew and Aramaic is set up in a way that is reflective of ongoing linguistic and cultural tensions. Furthermore, employing language choice as a way to convey essential information to the readers testifies to linguistic consciousness as the driving force behind the redaction and organization of the text. Another

²²³ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 5.

area where language consciousness is clearly demonstrated is the way the central protagonists relate to the Hebrew language. As leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah are protective of Hebrew, exalting it as the primary language of the community and reacting to perceived threats to its continuity – such as intermarriage with local peoples and linguistic attrition in the next generation. The impact of language consciousness as a literary force is palpable throughout Ezra and Nehemiah. The authors of the text have a clear agenda to promote Hebrew as the representative language of the Judean people (in spite of the linguistic hegemony of Aramaic) as a means to rebuild community and foster a sense of common identity among the returnees.

CHAPTER 4: DIGLOSSIA IN HEBREW AND ITS EFFECTS ON LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS

The advent of widespread bilingualism during the Persian Period left an indelible mark on the language profile of the postexilic Judean community, as acquiring proficiency in both Hebrew and Aramaic rendered interlocutors more cognizant of the unique roles and functions of each language. However, bilingualism was not the only force responsible for the surge of language consciousness; other preexisting linguistic conditions had an impact on elevating speaker awareness. One of these phenomena was diglossia, defined as a state in a speech community where “two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers under different conditions.”²²⁴ Diglossia can be seen in many languages today, in which speakers are proficient in both a native colloquial variety for day-to-day interactions as well as a written standard for formal communication. Languages such as Arabic and German are cited as quintessential examples of diglossia,²²⁵ with clear disparities between the spoken and written versions of the language. For modern languages, diglossia can be documented by comparing the lexicon, morphology, and phonology between two distinct varieties. However, showing the existence of diglossia within ancient Hebrew is a more challenging undertaking, as the language in its biblical form has long ceased to be spoken and only remains preserved as a liturgical language of the text. The problem with this is that liturgical texts are not perfect representations of vernacular. Sometimes, they can be more archaic than the corresponding spoken vernaculars,

²²⁴ Ferguson, *Diglossia*, 325.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 326-327, c.f. also *The SAGE Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, edited by Ruth Wodak, et. al., London: SAGE Publications, 2011, 450.

as in the case of Exodus 15. Unsurprisingly, the written corpus available to us overwhelmingly preserves a high-style, formal variety, leaving far fewer indications of any postulated colloquial dialect. This makes any argument for diglossia inherently less tenable because the linguistic evidence is less apparent; scholars must first employ a wide array of dialectological and literary-critical methods to uncover evidence of informal language embedded within the text before attempting to draw a comparison with the formal counterpart. In essence, scholars are constrained by textual limitations in their ability to make conjectures and determinations regarding which words, features, and forms are characteristically informal, as they can only work with a text that has been written in a largely formal style.

Nonetheless, examining the evidence for diglossia within Biblical Hebrew is important for the purposes of arguing heightened language consciousness. Just as bilingualism requires individuals to actively separate the languages and to pay attention to the context for language use, speakers of diglossic languages are actively conditioned to be constantly aware of which register to use, depending on the situation. Therefore, diglossia is a potent sociolinguistic force that often leads to interlocutors developing an increased sensitivity to minute differences. Some scholars have contended that it is worthwhile to compare situations of diglossia to bilingualism,²²⁶ given the underlying similarities in both linguistic setups. A prominent point of similarity is the way both linguistic conditions impact their speakers. Psycholinguistic studies on

²²⁶ Alan Hudson. "Outline of a theory of diglossia." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (2002): 2. Hudson writes: "In terms of their synchronic characteristics as well as what may be common patterns in the natural histories of these situations, diglossic situations may usefully be compared to and contrasted with other instances of standards-with dialects or with instances of societal bilingualism in the most generally understood use of these terms. The resulting classification is not as categorical as we might like; there are examples of societal bilingualism that bear some resemblance to diglossic situations, just as there are, or have been, examples of diglossia that, in certain aspects of their social evolution, resemble societal bilingualism."

Arabic-speaking children have found that the cognitive results of diglossia are similar to that of bilingualism, with speakers in both cases demonstrating higher levels of linguistic awareness.²²⁷

Proving the existence of diglossia within Hebrew brings support to the argument of language consciousness. Although this phenomenon has yet to achieve universal recognition in Biblical studies, many scholars have written about the diglossic nature of Biblical Hebrew. For example, Stephen Lieberman writes: "It is important for an understanding of the period that we recognize that there are two different varieties of Judean Hebrew: a vernacular variety and a literary variety."²²⁸ In his declarative, Lieberman critiques the monolithic conception of Biblical Hebrew as a single language and its replacement with a revised theory that allows for the relabeling of Hebrew as a linguistic mass comprised of numerous registers and local varieties. His re-definition of the nature of Hebrew involves the adoption of a model of linguistic bifurcation, with the literary and colloquial varieties distinguished from one another due to overt differences in lexicon and morphology. The most comprehensive work written on the issue is Gary Rendsburg's monograph, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, where he uses morphology as the primary means to support his argument.²²⁹ Understanding diglossia helps to elucidate the linguistic complexities within the biblical text, with this dissertation drawing from the work of these scholars in order to argue that authors were fully conscious of the disparity between the written and spoken languages.

²²⁷ Raphiq Ibrahim. "The cognitive basis of diglossia in Arabic: Evidence from a repetition priming study within and between languages." *Psychology research and behavior management 2* (2009): 93.

²²⁸ S.J. Lieberman, "Response to Professor Blau," in *Jewish Languages: Themes and Variations*, ed. H.H. Paper (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1978), 26.

²²⁹ Gary A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*. (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1990).

Methods for Proving the Existence of Diglossia in Hebrew

One of the most obvious challenges facing Biblical scholars is the difficulty in detecting traits of spoken language from a written text, as this requires meticulous effort in dissecting the text and surmising which elements appear to be the result of the permeation of colloquial structures and influences into the written word. Indeed, this is a problematic undertaking due to the “inextricability of speaking and writing in even those modes of discourse that seem most exclusively a matter of writing and reading,”²³⁰ as Wallace Chafe points out in his article, “The Relation between Spoken and Written Language.” Nonetheless, in spite of this “inextricability” and the inherent difficulty in distinguishing between the two, scholars have seemingly surmounted some of these challenges and have afforded current academic circles greater clarity surrounding the nature of spoken Hebrew. Nonetheless, only partial consensus has been achieved hitherto with regards to the precise range and extent of colloquial language within the text. James MacDonald’s article, “Some Distinctive Characteristics of Israelite Spoken Hebrew,” constitutes an early attempt to reconstruct oral vernacular from the textual corpus of the Bible.²³¹ He circumvents the limitations of writing by concentrating primarily on direct speech preserved in the Bible, using that as an indicator for how the language would have been spoken in contrast to its written counterpart. However, Rendsburg has heavily criticized MacDonald’s approach,

²³⁰ Wallace Chafe, “The Relation between Spoken and Written Language,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987): 398

²³¹ John MacDonald. "Some distinctive characteristics of Israelite spoken Hebrew." *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 32 (1975): 162-75.

claiming that Biblical writers tended to formalize their language even when documenting supposed instances of direct speech.²³²

Other ways to bypass textual constraints is by examining later strata of the Hebrew language and applying the data retroactively to reconstruct earlier oral dialects. One of the earliest scholars to do this is M.H. Segal, who achieves this by examining Mishnaic Hebrew and its unique linguistic developments and innovations, while comparing it to Biblical Hebrew.²³³ Segal's work helped to address the disparity between later stages of Hebrew and the standard Biblical idiom, an issue which had long constituted a source of scholarly contention. In many ways, Segal's work represents a counterpoint to the classic monograph of Abraham Geiger, who had previously argued that it seemed unlikely that Mishnaic Hebrew could be the natural descendant of Biblical Hebrew and must instead be an artificially contrived idiom adopted by Judeans for the purposes of writing.²³⁴ However, Segal rebutted this suggestion by adopting a radically different stance. While he acknowledges that the gaps between the two linguistic strata is wide, he accounts for the differences between the two by positing that Mishnaic Hebrew, in spite of its numerous strange features, does indeed descend from an earlier stage of the language. Its provenance is from the *colloquial language* spoken during Biblical times, not the written literary standard.

We have met with a considerable number of forms and constructions which are quite unknown in Aramaic. Some of these are found in BH in isolated cases, and in others it is possible at least to trace their connexion with BH prototypes; but, what is most important, nearly all of them bear the *stamp of colloquial usage and of popular development*, while,

²³² Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 19-20.

²³³ Moses H. Segal, "Mišnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 20, no. 4 (1908): 647–737.

²³⁴ A. Geiger, *Lehrbuch zur Sprache der Mischna*, (Breslau: F.G.C. Leuckart, 1845), 1-3

on the other hand, not a single trace has been discovered of that artificiality with which the MH idiom has been commonly credited.²³⁵

Segal's reference to the "stamp of colloquial usage" is significant for the purpose of this study.

While there is no block or text written completely in vernacular Hebrew has been preserved, traces and remnants of dialectal origin can be found both within the Bible and in later texts.

Some elements of Mishnaic Hebrew that he believes to have descended from colloquial Biblical Hebrew include the development of the genitive marker *שֶׁל* and its widespread use in the Mishnah, where it is declined forty times.²³⁶

If we accept Segal's argument, the innovation of *שֶׁל* reflects a natural development within Mishnaic Hebrew inherited from an older colloquial register of Biblical Hebrew, one that differed from the Standard Biblical Hebrew of the text. In Standard Hebrew, one commonly finds the use of *אשר ל*, the combination of the relative and preposition as a means to indicate possession. This formula is frequently found in the Hebrew Bible, with over 200 appearances. However, the less common equivalent *שֶׁל* replaces "אשר" with "שֶׁ" before attaching the preposition and the possessor noun. According to Segal, the reason for its infrequent occurrence within the Biblical corpus is due to it belonging a colloquial variety of Biblical Hebrew that only occasionally is seen within a text.²³⁷ *שֶׁל* is the colloquial counterpart of *אשר ל*, and, therefore, it enjoys limited usage in the written word. However, *שֶׁל* develops into an independent word within Mishnaic Hebrew and can be inflected on its own. This development reveals that while

²³⁵ Segal, "Mišnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic, 734.

²³⁶ Ibid., 732. "In about forty passages in the Migna and frequently in the Midrasim circumlocution by *שֶׁל* with the appropriate suffix is found in the place of the possessive suffix attached immediately to the noun."

²³⁷ Ibid., 724.

...של was severely restricted in the context of writing, it enjoyed continued popularity in spoken language. The following table illustrates the diachronic evolution of the genitive marker within different layers of Hebrew.

Table 3: Standard Biblical Hebrew, Colloquial Biblical Hebrew, and Mishnaic Hebrew

| Standard Biblical Hebrew | “Colloquial” Biblical Hebrew | Mishnaic Hebrew |
|--|--|---|
| <p>שָׁם אִישׁ מֵעֲבָדֵי שָׁאוּל בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נֶעְצָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְשָׁמוּ דָאָג הָאֲדָמִי אֲבִיר הָרָעִים אֲשֶׁר לְשָׁאוּל.</p> <p>Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of the herdmen that belonged to Saul - 1 Samuel 21:8</p> | <p>הִנֵּה מִטָּתוֹ שֶׁלִּשְׁלֹמֹה - שְׁשִׁים גְּבָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ: מִגְּבָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל</p> <p>Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; sixty mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. – Song of Solomon 3:7</p> | <p>עַל מַכְתּוֹ וּקְלָלָתוֹ שֶׁל זֶה וְשֶׁל זֶה</p> <p>For the striking and cursing of this one and that one – Yebamot 6:7</p> |

While the evidence cited above does not constitute definitive evidence, it does raise questions regarding the use of language and the disparity that must have existed between the written and spoken languages. Although the passages from Song of Solomon is generally classified as late biblical Hebrew, the replacement of the more common ל אשר with ...של raises the possibility of the permeation of dialectal influences, making the book a possible example of “colloquial biblical Hebrew” (should such a category actually exist). The subtle hints of dialect found in the Bible give us more information regarding the diglossic situation of Hebrew. Writers, for the most part, sought to avoid using colloquial language and adopted more formal conventions when composing texts. This explains the relative infrequency of ...של compared to ל אשר within the Biblical corpus. Nonetheless, although it was repressed when writing, ...של was a common

feature of the spoken language, resulting in its later grammaticalization in Mishnaic Hebrew (referred to as “MH” by Segal), at which point it has become so dominant that it can no longer be excluded from written texts. Segal writes that “the colloquial and popular character of MH. grammar is so strongly pronounced that it helps us in many cases to distinguish in BH. colloquial or dialectal forms and phrases from the literary and polite.”²³⁸ This distinction between dialectal and literary forms is essential for showing that Biblical Hebrew was a diglossic language, with speakers using ל אשר in writing, while retaining ...לְ in speech.

Therefore, Mishnaic Hebrew, while exhibiting significant differences from the written language of the Bible, is still believed to have naturally evolved from a pre-existing form of colloquial Hebrew, one which was only partially preserved in writing. Segal’s proposition supports the argument that some kind of diglossia must have existed in Biblical Hebrew, in spite of the relative dearth of explicit colloquialisms and jargon to contrast with written language. The use of ל אשר vs. ...לְ is one of the few examples available to us. Colloquial language is hard to detect in a written text for multiple reasons. Firstly, it is removed from its natural context and transplanted into an inorganic written medium. Secondly, even direct speech may not be a reliable indicator of how language was genuinely spoken because Biblical writers tended to homogenize the linguistic style of the text, inevitably formalizing the language and possibly replacing colloquialisms with standard counterparts.²³⁹ Therefore, Segal’s approach in discovering descendants of colloquialisms in later stages of Hebrew provides solid evidence for diglossia, as this shows that a vernacular Hebrew must have existed in Biblical times together with a literary register.

²³⁸ Ibid., 734.

²³⁹ Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 19-20.

Based on the examples presented above, one might argue that diglossia was part of the linguistic reality for Hebrew interlocutors in ancient Israel, with *at least* two varieties being used in contrasting contexts. As in the case of Arabic in the Middle East and German in Switzerland, speakers would have to consciously separate between the two registers and use each one at the appropriate occasion. Therefore, writers of the Bible would certainly have been conscious of the import of the type of language when composing the texts. Although it is difficult to precisely demarcate which morphological and lexical features belonged to each respective variety, this can be somewhat achieved with the use of deduction and analysis of the literary content in which apparent colloquialisms appear. The following sections will be dedicated to illustrating how the strategic use of colloquial language within the text contributes to consolidating language consciousness as a central underlying textual phenomenon.

Standard Biblical Hebrew as a Literary Standard in a Diglossic Situation

All diglossic languages are characterized by a paradoxical situation where there is great variety as well as remarkable uniformity at the same time. This is because the oral varieties exhibit tremendous diversity, yet speakers are united by a common written standard that remains relatively stable. Hebrew was also subject to these same conditions, with scholars having observed both the uniformity and diversity within the language.²⁴⁰ On the one hand, we have scholars like Ian Young²⁴¹ and Gary Rendsburg, who are fixated with the notion of internal diversity within Biblical Hebrew and have dedicated themselves to delineating the dialectal

²⁴⁰ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 137.

²⁴¹ Ian Young, "Evidence of Diversity in Pre-Exilic Judahite Hebrew." *Hebrew Studies* 38 (1997): 7-20.

nuances and subtle lexical variations that attest to this phenomenon. Their research has contributed to better elucidating the phenomenon of diglossia in Hebrew. However, on the other hand, there are counterarguments that point to the linguistic uniformity seen across a wide range of scriptural texts.

Frederick Cryer is one of the proponents of the uniformity argument. While it is generally acknowledged that the books of the Bible were redacted and compiled over an extensive period of time, Cryer finds this idea to be dubious. Instead, he argues that there is inadequate evidence from linguistic dating to justify the popular conception of the Bible's temporally prolonged, gradual composition, arguing for the general uniformity of the Biblical text. One possibility for the uniformity is someone editing the text at a later time to make it more homogeneous. However, Cryer proposes something else, arguing that the actual period of composition was substantially shorter than previously imagined, citing that the texts do not "reveal signs of historical differentiation."²⁴² Cryer's claim is provocative and seemingly outrageous because it vehemently opposes the narrative of the Bible slow crystallization over centuries that has been promulgated within the academic community. The fallacies of his claim will be addressed subsequently, yet Cryer's unconventional views are not entirely unfounded. His astonishment arises from the apparent linguistic homogeneity that spans numerous books within the Bible. While morphological and lexical diversity does indeed exist, one might expect a greater magnitude of variations and alterations, especially if the Hebrew language had continuously evolved over the course of several centuries. Ironically, it is this overall stability within Biblical Hebrew that has allowed linguists and grammarians to successfully conceptualize the grammar

²⁴² Frederick Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment*. (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1994), 192.

of the language.²⁴³ Regardless of the validity of his claims, Cryer's most significant contribution to existing academic form is his fixation on the notion of linguistic uniformity: the text, while sporadically punctuated with peculiarities, does not demonstrate adequate variability in language and style to reflect the postulated linguistic evolution that would have inevitably occurred after continual usage over an extended period of time.²⁴⁴ Of course, this also has to do with limited communities of practice in which the language was spoken.

Although Cryer's observation regarding the overall linguistic uniformity of the Biblical corpus seems reasonable, his supposition that the Bible must have consequently been written within a short period of time is less tenable. The main fallacy is that Cryer did not give due consideration to other possible explanations for the homogeneous use of language within the Bible, and this renders his argument of the Bible being written "at one go" less credible. Martin Ehrensward disputes Cryer by suggesting that the Bible was composed in a standardized literary idiom, referred to as Standard Biblical Hebrew.²⁴⁵ Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) is the appellation given by the Hebrew scholars to the historical stratum of Hebrew that appears internally consistent. SBH "reflects a horizon for the collective and editing of many Biblical traditions, one that seems to span from 725 to 500 B.C.E."²⁴⁶ The time period between the 8th and the 6th centuries B.C.E. constituted an epoch of prolific literary activity, during which numerous books of the Bible came to exist. The existence of a literary standard explains the

²⁴³ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 138.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁴⁵ Martin Ehrensward, "Once again: The problem of dating biblical Hebrew," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 11 (1997): 29-40.

²⁴⁶ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 137.

relative linguistic homogeneity that scholars like Cryer have noted, and a wide range of spoken dialects would have presumably coexisted with this codified linguistic entity.

Period of Textualization and Rise of Literacy in Ancient Judah – Implications for Language Consciousness

The aforementioned era between 725 and 500 B.C.E. is also known as a period of textualization, with the region experiencing remarkable literary output and literacy emerging beyond the confines of the upper class, thereby becoming a much more pervasive phenomenon across all social strata. This textual and cultural revolution began during the days of King Josiah²⁴⁷ and the results of its were significant. This period had fundamentally transformative effects on the social and political structures of the kingdom. For example, literacy was originally a skill limited to the elites and was therefore a marker of prestige and social preeminence. It was certainly not a common ability outside of distinguished groups of individuals, but the textual revolution ushered in momentous changes to preexisting social conditions, dynamically altering and reconfiguring the function of literacy and writing. In his monograph, *Writing and Literacy in the Ancient World of Israel*, Christopher Rollston examines the epigraphic evidence and opines on the basis of the texts discovered and studied that the definition of literary elite must be expanded to include more than just the scribal class. While most of the epigraphic remnants dating from this period feature a style of language that is characteristic of formal education and scribal training, it was not merely the scribes who were engaged in the practice of writing.²⁴⁸ The

²⁴⁷ Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 91.

²⁴⁸ Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the Ancient World of Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 127-128.

amount of textual artefacts, ostraca, and other forms of writing attributed to the kingdom of Judah during this time period is remarkable, given its relatively diminutive size and limited regional influence.²⁴⁹ The sheer quantity of written material culture is adequate to make a cogent argument that literacy must have extended beyond the traditional realm of the formally trained scribal schools and permeated into larger sects of the common populace. Although it is impossible to assess the levels of literacy of an ancient population, the abundance of the epigraphic evidence in conjunction with the increased production of literature are sufficient to contend that a significantly greater number of individuals had access to writing as a technology than ever before in the history of Israel. In fact, writing as a skill may have become so mundane and commonplace that individuals unable to perform the task were stigmatized.

Lachish Letter 3, also known as “the Letter of a Literate Soldier” is an example of the pervasiveness of writing as a technology during this period in ancient Israel. The soldier who penned the letter is outraged at the accusation that he is unable to read, showing a dynamic shift in the traditional attitudes toward literacy and writing.

Please explain to your servant regarding the letter
 which my Lord send to your servant last night for
 the heart
 of your servant is pained since you sent to your
 servant
 and because my Lord said, “you do not know
 how to write a letter.” As YHWH lives,
 no man has ever attempted to read a letter to me
 and also
 every letter that comes to me
 I have read and furthermore, I can recite it

(5) [נא] את אזנ עבדכ לספר אשר
 (6) שלחתה אדני לעבדכ אמש כי לב
 (7) עבדכ דוה מאז שלחכ אל עבד
 (8) כ וכי אמר אדני לא ידעתה
 (9) קרא ספר היהוה אמ נסה א
 (10) יש לקרא לי ספר לנצח וגמ
 (11) כל ספר אשר יבא אלי אמ
 (12) קראתי אתה ועוד אתננהו

Lachish Letter 3, lines 5-12

²⁴⁹ Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. Vol. 2, The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods 732-333 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 169.

Although some scholarly variance still exists regarding the exact decipherment and interpretation of the text, its content is an invaluable resource for conceptualizing the changing role of literacy. Literacy was a marker of social class and a means to command prestige and respect. Ian Young writes: “However the Lachish text is precisely rendered, it seems to show that literacy skills were a matter of some social standing in late monarchic Judah.”²⁵⁰ However, while it still functioned as a loose social marker, literacy was no longer the unattainable asset it once was. The soldier who wrote the letter expressed a very negative view of illiteracy and wished to prove himself in order to increase his social value. In the letter, he claims that not only is he not reliant on others to read to him, but he has also read and is able to recite every letter he has received (Lachish letter 3, lines 7-12).

With the growth in the number of people mastering the skills of reading and writing, it is quite possible that “this would be the first time in history that illiteracy among non-scribal classes was actually socially stigmatized.”²⁵¹ These radical changes reflect the ongoing cultural revolution and textualization taking place in ancient Judah during the time, with significant impact on the structure of society, practice of religion, and use of language.

Moreover, an important part of the process of textualization²⁵² was characterized by the explosion of literary output and the proliferation of literacy as a social phenomenon. This period

²⁵⁰ Young, Ian M. “Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence: Part II.” *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 48, no. 3, 1998, pp. 408–422, 412.

²⁵¹ Schiedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 107.

²⁵² It is important to problematize the issue of textualization and to note that it was a complex ongoing process and not marked by the occurrence of one-time event. See Schiedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 138. “The process of textualization (as I have described it) is certainly more complicated than the simple diachronic development. It is not a simple linear historical process.”

also had an irrevocable impact on the evolution of Hebrew as a written language. With the increase of the number of literates within the society inevitably came a more widespread familiarity with the rules and conventions governing formal writing and correspondence. Previously, scribes belong to an exclusive group of individuals who were given access to training and cultivation in the art and language of writing, but this once elusive knowledge must have become more ubiquitous as members of other social classes began to engage in the practice of reading and writing. It is important to point out that writing as a practice does not imply a direct transcription or representation of spoken language, but rather that there is an overt disparity between the nature of written and oral language. Khosrow Jahandari writes: “Speech and writing are characterized by two distinct sets of attributes. Linguistic research leads to the conclusion that the distinction between speech and writing is very real and extends across different cultures and languages.”²⁵³ Therefore, as people became educated in the conventions of written Hebrew, they also would have learned what distinguishes formal from informal language.

A great deal of the differences between writing and speaking can be attributed to the deliberateness of writing in contrast to the natural spontaneity of spoken language. Written language is generated ten times more slowly than its spoken counterpart, naturally allowing more time for precision and the articulate expression of ideas.²⁵⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising that the conventions of written language tend to be more formal and elaborate than speech. For instance, written texts usually exhibit the use of more sophisticated lexicon as well as complex

²⁵³ Khosrow Jahandarie, *Spoken and Written Discourse: a Multi-disciplinary Approach*. (Stamford: Ablex Publishing Company, 1999), 149.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

grammatical structures, such as subordinate clauses, in contrast to speech.²⁵⁵ Those are some examples of the linguistic differences that separate the two from one another.

Understanding the gap between oral vernacular and textual transmission is significant for elucidating the nature of the Hebrew used in ancient Israel and Judah and for understanding language consciousness as a phenomenon. Writing differing from speech seems to be axiomatic across world languages, and on the basis of this observation, one must presume that written Hebrew would have certainly differed from its spoken form. The precise extent of the differences, however, has yet to be defined and agreed upon. Therefore, as literacy becomes more ubiquitous in Jerusalem and Judah, people would have needed to learn not only the alphabet but also the ways written language is different from natural, spontaneous conversation. This is significant for our study for a number of reasons. Firstly, this provides a reasonable explanation for the relative linguistic homogeneity of the text that scholars like Cryer have problematized. Individuals engaged in the practice of writing adopted a new style and register of language that would not necessarily have been reflective of their natural speech. Such differences would be indicative of some kind of diglossia. Secondly, the transition from oral communication to written transmission would have necessitated deliberateness and forethought, as writing by nature is more meticulous and contrived. Language consciousness would have been an inevitable consequence, especially if the differences between written and spoken Hebrew were significant. In their attempt to emulate the formality and elaborate conventions of writing, writers would have been acutely aware of the linguistic implications.

As previously mentioned, Frederick Cryer had observed the overall homogeneity of Biblical Hebrew, prompting him to argue that the Bible must have been composed within a

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 144-145

relatively short time period. Nonetheless, acquiring a better understanding of the literary and cultural developments of the 8th-6th centuries B.C.E lead us to question the accuracy of Cryer's conjecture (who dated all of this to the postexilic period) and to propose alternative explanations for the phenomenon of linguistic homogeneity. With writing becoming increasingly commonplace and more people learning the conventions of proper written language, this would account for the relative stability of the Hebrew language during the Biblical period. Therefore, while spoken languages is in a state of continuous flux, standardizing a written language results in the deceleration of the evolutionary process. This is Rendsburg's primary argument in his doctoral dissertation, where he claims that the standard language (which he refers to as Classical Hebrew) "remained relatively stable in ancient times."²⁵⁶ The uniform and rigid nature of the Biblical text does not reflect the fluidity and evolution of spoken language. The following diagram from Rendsburg's monograph *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* illustrates this concept.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 31.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

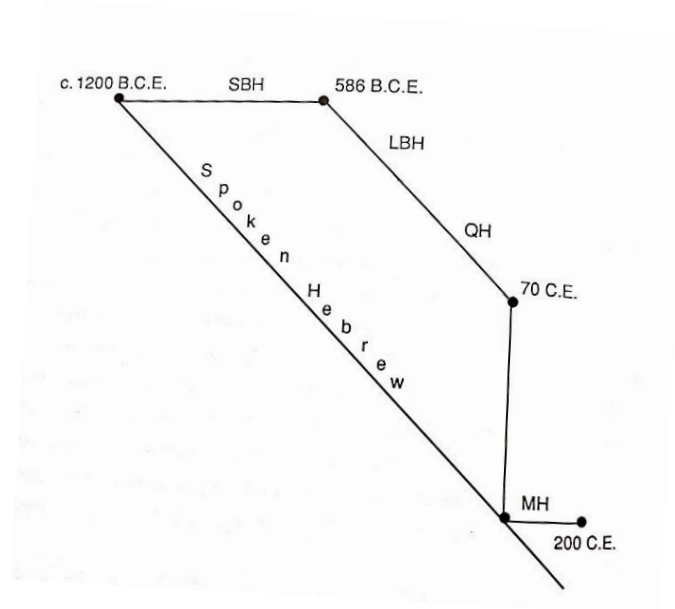


Figure 1: Rendsburg’s View of Diglossia in Hebrew

This diagram maps out the divergence between the spoken and written registers of Hebrew. With the passage of time, the gap between the colloquial and standard versions widens, as the oral dialects continue to develop independently while Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) remains relatively frozen. It is not until after 70 C.E. that written Hebrew undergoes a re-codification in the form of Mishnaic Hebrew, as it is updated to reflect the oral vernacular, which by this point was significantly different – the result of the cumulative effect of centuries of continual evolution. While Rendsburg’s diagram is helpful for visualizing the divergence between speech and writing and the diglossia that ensued, there are two flaws that one must address. Firstly, the figure is an oversimplification of the linguistic nature of Hebrew. Using the overarching label “spoken Hebrew” to encapsulate a wide array of oral dialects is problematic because Hebrew exhibited tremendous internal diversity (as we will discuss in chapter 6).

Secondly, Rendsburg assumes a common point of emanation for both spoken and written Hebrew (1200 B.C.E.), but this represents a potential fallacy because it raises the question of whether or not spoken and written Hebrew were ever identical, as there are inherent differences

between speech and writing. F. Niyi Akinnaso writes the following regarding the nature of these disparity between these two forms of language:

In general, it is argued that spoken and written language are structurally different because they differ in their modes of acquisition; in their methods of production, transmission, and reception; and in the ways in which elements of structure are organized. Speech is normally acquired naturally without formal instructions (in family settings, on playgrounds, on the street, etc.), whereas writing has to be consciously learned, usually in the formal setting of the school.²⁵⁸

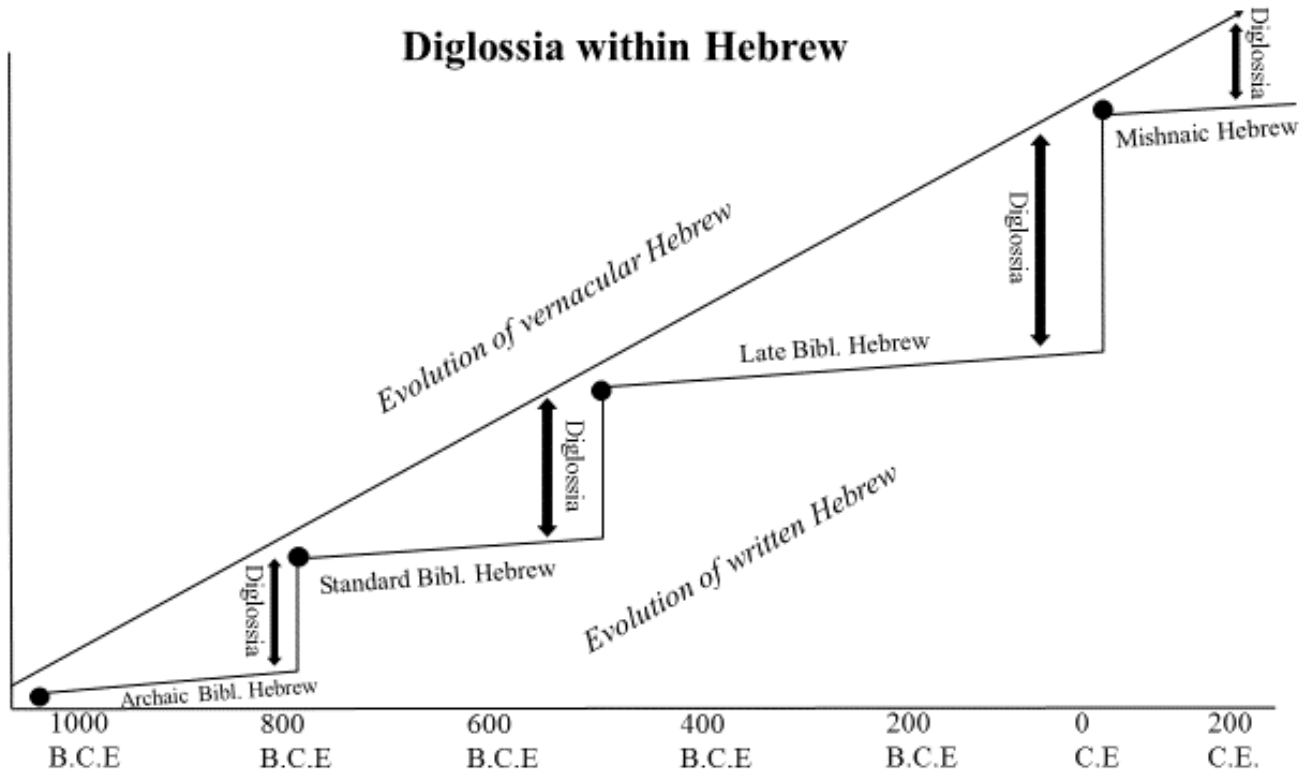
This seems to be a universal axiom governing languages. Even for non-diglossic languages, there exists a gap between the written and spoken registers of language, with regards to the level of formality and the context of use. There is always some structural difference between speech and writing, although it is difficult to quantify the precise magnitude.²⁵⁹ While the written forms of some languages may be closer to their spoken counterparts, it is highly unlikely that they are ever identical. Therefore, Rendsburg's diagram is problematic because it assumes that at some point in the past, Hebrew was written exactly as it was spoken. It is dubious if this were ever the case. There must have always been some kind of discernible gap between the two, even if it was not significant.

Therefore, we have created the following diagram to more accurately illustrate the diglossic situation within Hebrew:

²⁵⁸ F. Niyi Akinnaso, "On The Differences Between Spoken and Written Language." *Language and Speech* 25, no. 2 (1982): 111

²⁵⁹ Henry Allan Gleason. *Linguistics and English grammar*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p.368

Table 4: Diglossia within Hebrew



This diagram is an expansion of Rendsburg’s conceptualization of diglossic Hebrew, with a number of amendments. The long diagonal line indicates the continual evolution of vernacular Hebrew over the course of several centuries. The black dots mark the points of origin for various written standards (Standard Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew, etc.) and the social and political events that shaped change in written standards; however, these never intersect with the vernacular. This is important to emphasize because writing and speech are never identical. This was the greatest fallacy in Rendsburg’s argument regarding diglossia, as he erroneously assumed that spoken and written Hebrew would have had a common origin far in the past, and we have sought to rectify this. Even with the introduction of a new written standard closely related to its vernacular counterpart, the two sides never overlapped completely. Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) bridged some of the gap between the spoken and written forms of Hebrew, yet it is

untenable to claim that SBH is a perfect representation of the Hebrew spoken during the time. The dots representing the starting points of written Hebrew lie adjacent and parallel to vernacular Hebrew, never on it. This reinforces that a gap between writing and speech has always existed, and it only increases with the passage of time, developing into diglossia. Each subsequent codification of Hebrew narrows the preexisting gap but never fully eliminates it.

Furthermore, the lines represent the written standards curve slightly upwards as well in order to show that written language, though significantly more stable than vernacular, also experiences diachronic change. Both written and spoken language are continuously evolving but at radically different rates, and it is this difference in the rates of evolution that leads to the emergence of diglossia.

Acquisition of Literacy and Diglossia in Hebrew

As literacy increased and writing spread rampantly as a means of communication, more people would have learned to compose and express themselves in a centuries-old idiom that no longer accurately reflected their current manner of speech. Martin Ehrenvärd responds to Cryer's observation of linguistic uniformity:

“Accordingly, a priori, we cannot expect to find diversity on the scale Cryer is looking for. Being the literary standard language, it was in many respects the same throughout the Biblical Period and developed relatively little, as is the case with Standard Arabic. It was the spoken language which developed rapidly and which came to be used, eventually, also a literary medium.”²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Ehrensvärd, “Once again: The problem of dating biblical Hebrew,” 35

This gap between the spoken and written languages is typical of diglossic languages, and should this be the case, Hebrew would certainly qualify as one. Linguistic standardization results in the written register evolving at a much slower rate than the spoken language, which continually changes with the passage of time.

Furthermore, Ehrenvärd makes a comparison to Standard Arabic, which is highly conservative, preserving numerous archaic elements that have long disappeared from the colloquial varieties spoken across the Middle East. Rendsburg also draws from Arabic in his argument that Hebrew must have been similarly diglossic.²⁶¹ All of this information allows scholars to reconstruct the linguistic situation of Biblical Hebrew, with an archaic standard language dominating the literature coexisting with oral vernaculars spoken by people. These colloquial varieties have very limited attestation in the biblical corpus as a result of the hegemony of Standard Biblical Hebrew but permeate the text on occasion. Ehrenvärd's and Rendsburg's comparison to Arabic and the sociolinguistic conditions its interlocutors experienced is relevant for better understanding the postulated existence of diglossia in ancient Hebrew. Typically, for the purposes of most formal written communications, Modern Standard Arabic is used. This register of the language is directly derived from the classical version and is considered to be its "natural heir."²⁶² As such, the codified written Standard of Arabic naturally preserves linguistic features and morphological structures from an earlier stratum of the language, many of which have now vanished or have fallen into disuse in colloquial Arabic dialects. While the colloquial varieties spoken across the Middle East have undergone the natural

²⁶¹ Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 19-21.

²⁶² Muhammad Al-Sharkawi, *History and Development of the Arabic Language: From Pre-Islamic Times to the Age of Conquests*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 210.

mutation characteristic of any spoken language, the written register of Arabic has resisted change, as standardization has resulted in its continual retention of archaic features and obsolete forms. Linguistic standardization of written language can prevent it from developing naturally, as the community of practice forces it to remain unchanged and extremely conservative for religious reasons. As mentioned previously, written and spoken language are not identical to one another, given the different contexts in which each is used. The former tends to be more formal and elaborate, while the latter is more spontaneous and terser. However, the standardization of written language will inevitably result in the gap between the two forms widening, with differences between writing and speech becoming more apparent with the passage of time. Standardization is an artificial imposition on a language that prevents it from developing organically, forcing it to preserve archaic features and fossilize old structures. A similar situation has been posited for Latin and its diachronic evolution. The initial codification of classical Latin occurred when the spoken and written languages were still relatively similar; however, centuries elapsed, and the colloquial forms developed and mutated continuously, while the standardized variety remained relative stable in its antique state. Consequently, Vulgar Latin dialects diverged significantly from their written counterpart. Pulgram writes the following regarding the axiom of linguistic disparity between spoken and written versions of language:

In all periods of linguistic development, the written language, if one exists, differs more or less from the spoken, except perhaps during that comparatively brief span of time when it is in the act of arising from the vernacular, when it is just being codified. But divergences will emerge soon, because as change lies in the nature of language, so conservatism lies in the nature of writing and spelling.²⁶³

²⁶³ Ernst Pulgram. "Spoken and Written Latin." *Language* 26, no. 4 (1950): 462-463

Pulgram's findings are immensely useful for understanding the relationship between the Hebrew of daily speech and the Hebrew of the text. During the initial codification of Hebrew (12th-10th centuries), the written register likely remained relatively close to the spoken varieties. Although it is impossible to know this for certain, this is the argument based on comparisons to Latin and its early standardization. However, centuries later and by the time of the period of standardization (700-586 B.C.E), the gap between the two must have grown significantly. Writing continued to be conservative in nature, while the oral vernaculars had undergone natural alterations and shifts. The spoken language would have evolved continually from the 8th to 4th centuries B.C.E, whereas Standard Biblical Hebrew frozen, becoming the classical standard during the revival of written Hebrew. This resulted in significant diglossia during the Persian Period especially.

Therefore, the codification of Hebrew as a written idiom can be viewed as an artificial intervention in the diachronic development of the language that prevented the language from exhibiting the organic changes that occur in most spoken tongues after a protracted period of continual use. This is not to say that Hebrew did not change or evolve at all – the oral vernaculars of people must certainly have changed and showed signs of local variation. Nonetheless, the universal standard that individuals learned for the purpose of writing and composing texts changed remarkably little, leaving us today with a textual corpus that is linguistically uniform and not genuinely reflective of the alterations that occurred in spoken language. Therefore, one can surmise that the uniformity of standard Hebrew is actually a sign of diglossia.

The Affinity between Scripturalization and Language Standardization

Rendsburg proposes that Hebrew was standardized during the United Monarchy period (around 1000 B.C.E.).²⁶⁴ However, this seems to be much too early, and it will be contended that much of the standardization of Hebrew occurred during the Josianic age when many of the texts were collected, copied, written, and edited. Furthermore, it is untenable to attribute the standardization of a language to a single event or time period. Rather it is more cogent to argue that the standardization of Hebrew begins with centralization and urbanization from the late 8th to the early 6th century. The Josianic Period is important for understanding the process of standardization, as this was a time of religious reform and cultic revival in the kingdom of Judah. More importantly, it is also regarded as the era in which the book of Deuteronomy and the related *Deuteronomistic History* were composed. The central argument for this dating is the alignment of the religious precepts of Deuteronomy with the new practices implemented during the Josianic Period, making Deuteronomy seem like a reflection of Josiah's reforms.²⁶⁵ This theory regarding the book's redaction and canonization was first proposed by W.M.L Dewette in his classic monograph *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* and is still sustained by contemporary scholars such as Bernard Levinson, who uphold the dating of the book to the time of Josiah based on the flourishing of the cult during this era.²⁶⁶ The Josianic Period constituted a time of prolific literary production, during which scripture was actively written and added to the

²⁶⁴ Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 175 - "With the standardization of Classical Hebrew, especially from c. 1000 B.C.E onward in Jerusalem, and the continued development of the spoken idiom, the difference between the two dialects became more pronounced."

²⁶⁵ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 44

²⁶⁶ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 63

existing corpus of sacred texts. This time period abounding with the production of religious texts and implementation of new cultic practices is where language codification can be visibly observed. In fact, scholars like Ernst Knauf go as far as to posit that the Hebrew of the Bible was never a spoken language but was actually a literary composite, referring it to the written language as “das Produkt des Kanonisierungsprozesses”²⁶⁷ (the product of the canonization process).

The connection between scripturalization and linguistic standardization is unmistakable, as language is the tool that allows for the writing of scripture, just as it is the tool for penning any kind of text. However, scripture distinguishes itself from plebian and common forms of writing in that it occupies a position of preeminence and sacredness in the minds of the readers. Those who uphold the religious ordinances of scripture also subscribe to the notion of the intrinsic holiness of both of the text and the language in which it was composed. This belief in the sacredness of a text is an essential part of the scripturalization process. William Schniedewind writes, “A key aspect of the process of scripturalization is the endowment of sacred authority to the written word. The written word must have authority, particularly religious authority, in order for it to become sacred.”²⁶⁸ In order for a text to become scripturalized, it must be distinguished from other literary works. The content of scriptures is deemed by adherents to be pure and perfect, and the rules and regulations embedded within a holy text are to be upheld with utmost regard. Writing is also an essential ingredient in the process of scripturalization because authority

²⁶⁷ Ernst Axel Knauf, “War ‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache,” *Zeitschrift für Althebräistik* 3 (1990): 11-23.

²⁶⁸ Schniedewind, “Scripturalization in Ancient Judah,” in *Contextualizing Israel’s Sacred Writings: Ancient Literary, Orality, and Literary Production*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt, (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 318.

is transferred from oral forms of communication to the written word, thereby shifting the “social loci of authority.”²⁶⁹ Unlike orality, which is arguably a less accurate and reliable form of transmission, writing enjoys the advantage in that it preserves the content of a text in its pristine form. Moreover, it is unsurprising that once a text becomes scripturalized and occupies a position of sacredness in the mind of religious adherences, the language in which it was composed would also enjoy immediate veneration. Writing is also linked to divinity, as seen in Neo-Assyrian vassal treaties, which were “written down and enforced by divine power.”²⁷⁰ The utility of writing as a technology to faithfully transcribe and preserve religious rituals, together with the association of the written word with divine authority, makes the language of scripture holy in the minds of devout adherents.

Therefore, the proliferation of scripture during the time of Josiah would have resulted in the promotion of literary Hebrew and its perception by speakers as holy. Religious and linguistic ideology are therefore intertwined. Religious adherents must not only believe in the holiness of the texts from which they derive doctrine, but they must believe that the language of those texts is holy and therefore worthy of veneration. Joshua A. Fishman describes this as a condition for languages that are considered “inherently holy”:

All religions derived from Judaism, the so-called “Abrahamic religions” recognize as holy the language(s) of revelation and of their respective holy scriptures. In each of these cases, the language (or “variety” of the language) that is revelation and scripture related is by now (and has been for over a millennium) a “religious classical,” i.e. a variety not employed for quotidian vernacular purposes.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 318.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 315.

²⁷¹ Joshua A. Fishman, “‘Holy Languages’ in the Context of Societal Bilingualism.” in *Opportunities and Challenges of Bilingualism*, ed. Li Wei, Jean-Marc Dewale, and Alex Housen. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), 17.

Fishman's argument succinctly contends the axiomatic relationship between religion and language, as well as explains the subsequent phenomenon of diglossia that arises from a language being elevated to the status of "holy." In the cases of major world faiths, religious practitioners invariably uphold not only the sacredness of the texts themselves but also the sacredness of the original languages used in those texts. Therefore, these language and linguistic varieties continually retain an eminent position for many people, although they no longer exist as spoken tongues. Fishman refers to these as "religious classical" languages as they do not have any function in mundane activities. This is the important part for our argument regarding standardization and diglossia. At the time of scripturalization during the Josianic Period, the variety of Hebrew used in composing works like Deuteronomy may have possibly assumed the position as an inherently holy language, and with the passage of time, this language would have continued to be read and recited by Judeans, even as their oral vernaculars shifted.

It is here that Classical Arabic serves as a useful tool for comparison with Hebrew and corroborates Fishman's assertion regarding the relationship between religion and language. Arabic is a quintessential diglossic language according to sociolinguist Charles Ferguson, having one standardized written register that unites speakers of disparate and often mutually unintelligible colloquial varieties. In the Arab world, the standard co-exists with colloquial varieties; both continue to be used, albeit in different contexts. Educated Arabic natives are competent in at least two forms of their language, although the term "diglossia" remains controversial among some Arabic scholars, who contend that the linguistic situation of Arabic

involves multiple linguistic strata, exceeding the binary nature implied in the term.²⁷² In any case, it is unequivocal that “Arabic” encapsulates at the very least two distinct categories – standard and colloquial – with the possibility of numerous intermediate categories in between. Arabic and its diglossic nature serve as a useful comparison to Hebrew.

In particular, the development and emergence of Standard Arabic is of great interest. The preeminent status it holds across the Arab world is rooted in faith and religious ideology. Although it is commonly hailed as the living carnation of the most pristine form of Qur’anic Arabic, Standard Arabic is not the genetic ancestor of the numerous spoken varieties. To believe that all colloquial varieties emanated and diverged from Standard Arabic is a gross fallacy. In fact, quite the opposite is true; Arabists have attested to the existence of dialectal differences before the composition of Qur’an and rise of Islam.²⁷³ There was never a time in the history of Arabic where all Arabs spoke Standard Arabic. However, it is the redaction of Islamic scriptures that ignited and consolidated the standardization of the Arabic language. The language in which God gave his revelation (*nuzūl*) gained immediate prestige and veneration, and it became important that this register of language be preserved and retained for posterity.

Scripturalization is inextricably connected to linguistic standardization, as religious adherents fervently believe not only in the infallibility of the sacred texts but also in the infallibility of the language in which they were composed. Classical Arabic was codified due to the rise of the Islamic faith and became affiliated with purity and perfection because of its role in the scriptural tradition of Islam. A standard, pure variety of Arabic was established and

²⁷² El-Said Badawi, *Mustawayat al-`Arabiyya al-mu`asira fi Misr*. (in Arabic). Levels of contemporary Arabic in Egypt. (Cairo, Daar al-Ma`arif. 1973).

²⁷³ Muhammad Al-Sharkawi, *History and Development of the Arabic Language: From Pre-Islamic Times to the Age of Conquests*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 208.

propagated throughout Islamic territories as a way to preserve the holiness of the language. Fischer writes that “the will of the Muslims to protect the purity of the language...made the establishing of grammatical norms and institutions of language teaching inevitable.”²⁷⁴ This purist ideology ultimately galvanized the movement to standardize Arabic and to ensure that the language of God’s revelation remain pristine and uncorrupted by external influences. This is the point where the linguistic prescriptivism took firm hold, and there was now a clear metric to determine “correctness.” Written language should therefore approximate the linguistic register found in the Qur’an. In fact, using so-called correct language – especially in writing – was imperative because it became an indicator of morality. Yasir Suleiman writes: “In this context [of Arabic], correctness and purity are linked; correctness implies purity; and incorrectness implies impurity.”²⁷⁵ The moral and religious pressure to adopt proper conventions has rendered the standardization of Arabic highly effective. To this day, the standard form of Arabic (now known as Modern Standard Arabic) has evolved comparatively little,²⁷⁶ while the oral varieties spoken across the Middle East and North Africa have changed significantly, showing significant divergence from their written counterpart. The obsession with purity and correctness are elements of the linguistic ideology responsible for shaping the Arabic language and ensuring the preservation of an archaic, formal standard. “This link between purity and standardization points to the ideological and political loadings of language in the Arabic linguistic tradition.”²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Wolfdietrich Fischer, “Classical Arabic.” in *The Semitic Languages*, ed. Robert Herzon. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 188.

²⁷⁵ Yasir Suleiman, “Ideology and the Standardization of Arabic.” in *Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Reem Bassiouney and E. Graham Katz, (Georgetown University Press: Washington D.C, 2012), 211.

²⁷⁶ Fischer, “Classical Arabic,” 188.

²⁷⁷ Suleiman, “Ideology and the Standardization of Arabic,” 211.

Therefore, the standardization of Arabic occurred as a natural accompaniment to scripturalization during the rise of Islam. The existence of Standard Arabic is the direct result of politics and religious ideology, with speakers affiliating the language with holiness and purity.

In the case of Arabic, scripturalization proved to be an inexorable force in the process of linguistic standardization. Speakers viewed the Arabic of the Qur'an as holy and infallible and thus worthy of promulgation as a universal written standard. Therefore, even as the oral vernaculars continued to evolve and diverge with the lapse of many centuries, the written form of Arabic remained relatively unchanged. We posit that there was a similar situation with Hebrew, where the scripturalization that occurred during the Josianic Period led to the Hebrew of the holy texts being codified and preserved. In fact, it is the discovery and reading of the sacred scroll in 2 Kings 22 that ignited the religious reforms of this era.²⁷⁸ It is the written word that becomes authoritative during the Josianic age, and Josiah is warned by the prophetess Huldah to heed the words of the text:

ותאמר אליהם, כה-אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל: אמרו לאיש אשר-שלח אתכם אלי. כה אמר יהוה הנני מביא רעה אל-המקום הזה ועל ישביו את כל דברי הספר אשר קרא מלך יהודה.

And she said unto them: So says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man that sent you unto me. So says the LORD: Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. – 2 Kings 22:15-16

The words of the book (דְּבָרֵי הַסֵּפֶר) have divine authority because God is able to implement everything recorded in the text, should the people persist in their unfaithful ways. Not only is the content authoritative, but the language of scripture by association also becomes authoritative. It immediately commands authority because it represents the word of God. Schniedewind writes,

²⁷⁸ Schniedewind, "Scripturalization," 319.

“Through these typical forms of authoritative Neo-Assyrian writing, the Josianic Reform narrative scripturalizes the scroll.”²⁷⁹ We propose taking this further and claiming not only the scripturalization of the scroll but the veneration and subsequent codification of the language of the scroll. Religious adherents began to revere Hebrew as a language because it is representative of divine power, just as they revered the content of the scroll.

The same religious purity ideology behind the establishment of Standard Arabic would also be at work with the standardization of Hebrew during the Josianic era. The language of scriptures would be viewed as worthy of preservation in its purest, more pristine form. This would have also inevitably led to the development of diglossia within Hebrew, as the gap between the spoken and written forms would widen with the passage of time. Even after the reign of Josiah, the Hebrew used in Deuteronomy would continue to serve as the standard for writing. However, in speech, people do not adhere to prescribed conventions of formality and correctness, and their vernaculars would diverge further and further from the “holy” written language. Scripturalization, language standardization, and diglossia are interrelated phenomena; Hebrew certainly experienced all of these conditions.

Implications of Diglossia for Understanding Language Consciousness

Proving the existence of some kind of diglossia in ancient Hebrew has important consequences for understanding the notion of language consciousness. As mentioned at the beginning, diglossia is one of the sociolinguistic conditions that contributes to elevating levels of linguistic awareness among speakers. When the difference between the spoken and written

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 319.

becomes so overt, speakers will have to become more aware of the context for language use. This is the case with Arabic, where interlocutors have to be cognizant of the proper occasion to use either the formal standard or the natural oral vernacular.²⁸⁰ For diglossic tongues, language use becomes highly dependent on context, requiring that speakers be constantly conscious of when to use which form of the language. Just as Arabic natives are keenly aware of the differences between standard written and spontaneous speech, Hebrew speakers during the Biblical period would have likewise exhibited a similar consciousness. When engaged in textual transmission, Hebrew speakers needed to adopt an archaic and unnatural idiom that no longer reflected the innovations of their dialect. This would have rendered them undoubtedly cognizant of the changes they needed to make to render their language more formal and suitable for the context of writing.

Furthermore, writing in any language is a deliberate process that requires full awareness. Those engaging in the practice of writing must synthetically alter their style of language, repudiating the spontaneity of spoken language in favor of more rigid manner of expression. This is accentuated in the case of diglossic language like Biblical Hebrew, where the written conventions differ significantly from the norms of quotidian speech. In order to render their writing formal and adherent to established standards, composers of text were compelled to assume a style of writing characterized by archaic features that are now obsolete in the spoken counterpart. As a consequence of this dichotomy between writing and speaking, interlocutors of diglossic languages must develop a sense of language consciousness. Studies have been conducted in psycholinguistics to measure and assess the level of “metalinguistic awareness” in

²⁸⁰ Abdulkafi Albirini, “The Sociolinguistic Functions of Codeswitching between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic.” *Language in Society* 40, no.5 (2011): 537–562.

speakers of Arabic, who must constantly navigate and distinguish between two distinct registers of the language: standard literary Arabic for writing and the colloquial dialect. In one particular study, Arabic-speaking school children were tested on two categories: phonemic awareness (ability to distinguish between sounds in Standard Arabic and in their local dialect) as well as vocabulary (separating between the lexicon of the formal and informal registers).²⁸¹ The results of the testing indicated that in order to successfully navigate and complete the given tasks, the Arabic-speaking schoolchildren demonstrated a similar level of cognizance and metalinguistic awareness as bilingual individuals who speak two very different languages (Hebrew and Russian, for example). Zohar Eviatar and Raphiq Ibrahim write: “The results of the metalinguistic skills and vocabulary measures suggest that preliterate and literate Arab children function as bilinguals as a result of having to deal with the two forms of Arabic.”²⁸² The data collected from this psycholinguistic experiment proves to be useful for the purposes of our study. Arabic speakers must constantly switch between two different forms of the language – one for the purposes of reading and writing, and one for easy, fluid conversation with friends and family. The result is that speakers develop a keen sensitivity to linguistic changes, as they constantly are aware of subtle morphological, phonological, and lexical differences that separate Standard Arabic from the colloquial variety. The conclusion of this study suggests that maintaining and balancing between two forms is equally intense a process as navigating between two very different tongues.²⁸³ The same mental faculty and dexterity seen in bilinguals is also observed in

²⁸¹ Zohar Eviatar and Raphiq Ibrahim. "Bilingual is as bilingual does: Metalinguistic abilities of Arabic-speaking children." *Applied Psycholinguistics* 21, no.4 (2000): 451-471.

²⁸² Ibid., 462.

²⁸³ Ibid., 462.

speakers of a diglossic language like Arabic, who face a similar challenge in having to navigate between two distinct idioms for communication. In fact, the act of alternating between two registers of the same language is so similar to switching between languages that it has been referred to as “diglossic switching”²⁸⁴ and has been used to understand the intricacies of navigating between Egyptian spoken Arabic and literary Arabic.²⁸⁵ The overlap between bilingual code-switching and diglossic switching is significant,²⁸⁶ and both are predicated on the active awareness of speakers to ensure that the two language forms in questions are used correctly.

The psycho- and sociolinguistic research conducted on Arabic is immensely useful for the conceptualization of Hebrew as a diglossic language. The vast gulf of differences separating formal Arabic from informal vernaculars has significant effects on the mental and intellectual processes its speakers must undergo in order to successfully keep the two linguistic varieties separate. Likewise, it is postulated that speakers of Hebrew in Jerusalem during the Persian Period would have experienced similar conditions, given the gap between written Hebrew and its spoken counterpart. The psycholinguistic data garnered indicates that Arabic natives exhibit unusually high levels of metalinguistic awareness as a result of being constantly required to

²⁸⁴ Reem Bassiouney, *Arabic Sociolinguistics*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 28.

²⁸⁵ Mushira Eid, “Principles for Code-Switching between Standard and Egyptian Arabic. *Al-'Arabiyya* 21, no. 1/2 (1988): 51-79.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

“In concluding this paper, I would like to relate briefly the results of this research to work done in bilingual code-switching- work that first inspired me with ideas for this research and for approaching the alternating use of SA and EA as being an instance of "diglossic code-switching." My purpose here is primarily to show that the principles proposed in this paper are similar in certain respects to principles proposed in the literature on bilingual code-switching.”

switch between the two forms of their language in different situations. On the basis of this evidence, one could argue that pre-exilic Hebrew speakers would also have developed a similar level of consciousness regarding language and language use, the direct consequence of needing to switch between standard Hebrew and their own local variety. Therefore, the evidence from psycholinguistic studies and tests corroborate our contention that scribes together with writers of the Hebrew Bible were conscious of the import of language. Given their linguistic circumstances, a heightened level of linguistic awareness is the natural response of individuals who practice diglossia in their everyday lives.

In our discussion of diglossia within Hebrew and the differences between the written and spoken versions, it is important to note that Hebrew was in rapid decline during the Persian Period. It had been largely eclipsed by the emergence and hegemony of Aramaic as the lingua franca of the Near East. A clear sign of the rise of Aramaic within the Judean community is the adoption of the Aramaic block alphabet as a replacement of the traditional Paleo-Hebrew script.

Max Wagner writes:

Ungefähr parallel zur Übernahme des Aramäischen als Volkssprache wird sich auch der Wechsel von der althebräischen Schrift zur aramäischen Quadratschrift vollzogen haben.²⁸⁷

Approximately parallel to the takeover of Aramaic as the language of the people was the change from the Old Hebrew script to the Aramaic square script).

The Persian Period witnessed the rise of Aramaic, which put Hebrew into a precarious position. Both written and vernacular Hebrew suffered displacement in this changing linguistic landscape,

²⁸⁷ Max Wagner, *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentarischen Hebräisch: Vol. 96.* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2016), p.7

with Aramaic dominating in both writing and speech within the Judean speech community in Jerusalem. Regarding the continuity of Hebrew during this time, William Schniedewind writes:

I would argue that the Jewish people living in the Persian province of Yehud ‘lost’ – to some extent – their historical language and adopted the Aramaic language of the Persian empire. One might say that the written Hebrew language died, or more precisely, that the scribal institutions for Hebrew languished.²⁸⁸

It seems that the practical use of written Hebrew was greatly reduced during the Persian Period based on the limited Hebrew epigraphic evidence during this time. Nonetheless, Hebrew continued to retain a special role as a liturgical language, and some vernaculars of Hebrew survived.²⁸⁹ The retention of Hebrew in both speech and writing – however limited – indicates that diglossia would have continued to be a characteristic phenomenon of the Judean speech community. Although Hebrew was no longer the dominant tongue of the Jerusalem Jewry, it continued to be significant for many reasons: “Even while Hebrew was receding as the vernacular and written language, it was being preserved as a liturgical language, a sacred tongue, and an icon of political legitimacy and national identity.”²⁹⁰ The disappearance of Hebrew was not a sudden event, but rather, it was a process of gradual attrition, during which diglossia persisted, as the remnants of spoken Hebrew differed from the holy texts studied and revered by the Judean community. As long as both written and spoken Hebrew continued to exist at some level, regardless of how limited its role had become, diglossia would have been present.

²⁸⁸ Schniedewind, “Aramaic, the Death of Written Hebrew, and Language Shift in the Persian Period,” 137

²⁸⁹ J. Fitzmeyer, “The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 501-531

²⁹⁰ Schniedewind, “Aramaic, the Death of Written Hebrew, p.144

Colloquialisms as Examples of Language Consciousness

Having established that scribes and writers of the biblical text developed a high level of metalinguistic awareness as a result of the diglossic nature of ancient Hebrew, we can suggest that apparent colloquialisms in the text were not inadvertent. Writing in Hebrew required acuity; those engaging in the practice needed to apply filters in order to sift the numerous permutations of spoken language in order to distill it into a state suitable for textual transmission. Using a standard language radically different from one's oral vernacular is a complex process, through which the writer has to replace common words with more obscure vocabulary and basic grammatical structures with more complex ones that have largely fallen out of use. Being accustomed to the demands of literary conventions, writers tend to avoid using informal language and jargon when composing a text. It is precisely for this reason that Gary Rendsburg expresses skepticism regarding the legitimacy of direct speech as a source for reconstructing oral vernacular Hebrew: "It is clear that when Biblical authors composed their works, they couched everything, including direct speech, in the classical language."²⁹¹ According to Rendsburg, the scarcity of informal language can be attributed to writers "translating" direct quotations into formal standard Hebrew. He goes on and draws a comparison to the Arabic of the Qur'an, where the speeches of Muhammad are not preserved in their pristine form (presumably, some sort of ancient Arabian dialect) but rather are rendered with the proper Classical Arabic equivalent.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 19

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 19-20

However, colloquialisms and inconsistencies do exist in the Hebrew Bible. Although much of this chapter has been dedicated to providing evidence to corroborate and explain the phenomenon of linguistic homogeneity within the Hebrew Bible, scholars have also pointed out that there are sporadic peculiarities and signs of diversity within the biblical corpus. Therefore, while the overall text seems *relatively* uniform, there are sufficient inexplicable features and linguistic oddities to lead scholars to argue for diverse types of Hebrew, attaching epithets based on chronology and geography, such as “early,” “late” or “northern.”²⁹³ It is important to establish that the Hebrew language is homogeneous as well as heterogeneous. Understanding the homogeneity of the text allows us to better explicate and account for the instances when heterogeneous elements are featured. This dissertation suggests that many (although certainly not all) of the linguistic nonconformities of the late biblical literature can be attributed to oral vernaculars. Writers were fully conscious of which elements belonged to formal Hebrew and which ones to informal Hebrew. Therefore, the appearance of any colloquial elements in the Hebrew Bible should be taken seriously as signals of something with literary-critical significance because writers were well-versed in refining their language when writing.

Because speakers of diglossic languages are keenly aware of the type of language they are using, the unexpected appearance of a colloquial term or informal jargon does not represent a lapse in consciousness on the part of the writer. On the contrary, it constitutes proof that the writers used dialectal language at critical moments in order to convey a specific message to their audience. Chapter six of the dissertation will elaborate further on this argument by examining dialectal traces that have permeated the Biblical corpus.

²⁹³ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 137

Summary of the Effects of Diglossia on Language Consciousness

Diglossia is a sociolinguistic condition that generally results in speakers developing a more acute and sophisticated sense of linguistic awareness. The frequent transitioning between spoken and written forms of the same language have the same cognitive effects on speakers as switching between two completely different languages, as demonstrated by studies on Arabic-speaking schoolchildren. While a native may appear to effortlessly straddle two linguistic varieties, in actuality, it is a mentally exerting task that requires acuity and meticulous attention to details. Constantly weaving in and out between formal and informal registers conditions a speaker to be more sensitive and attuned to linguistic nuances and subtleties. It has been shown that Biblical Hebrew was a diglossic language, with a wide gap between the spoken and written versions that speakers needed to mentally bridge. Hebrew speakers accustomed to navigating between the formal Hebrew of scripture and the informal Hebrew of colloquial speech would have developed a clear understanding of the myriad elements comprising the linguistic gulf between the two registers.

CHAPTER 5: DIGLOSSIA IN ARAMAIC AND ITS IMPACT ON LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS

Aramaic as a Diglossic Language

In many ways, proving the existence of diglossia within Aramaic is a more straightforward and tenable undertaking than for Hebrew. Previously, we had cited the scholarly work of Moses Hirsch Segal, who argued in his study of Mishnaic Hebrew (MH) that it is the natural descendent of an undocumented colloquial variety of Biblical Hebrew that existed alongside Standard Biblical Hebrew.²⁹⁴ Therefore, while direct attestation of colloquial Hebrew is extremely limited, examination of later strata of the language allow for its reconstruction. Applying this method to Aramaic proves even more effective for postulating the coexistence of colloquial dialects alongside Imperial Aramaic, the written standard promoted across the Persian Empire. Examining the linguistic variation within later strata of the language allows us to form more accurate conjectures regarding the internal diversity that must have existed in Aramaic during an earlier stage.

After the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire, we witness the emergence of numerous Aramaic dialects, many of which developed independent scripts and literary traditions. Our contention is that these divergent dialects of Aramaic did not suddenly spring up; these colloquial varieties had always existed. They simply had no written attestation due to the hegemony of Imperial Aramaic. However, after the dissolution of the empire, Aramaic speech

²⁹⁴ Segal, Moses H. “Mišnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic,” 647–737. Refer to chapter 4 of this dissertation for an extended discussion regarding the context and methods of Segal’s approach and how it is useful for the purposes of arguing diglossia within Hebrew.

communities experienced sudden linguistic autonomy. They were no longer constricted by the universal linguistic conventions prescribed across the empire and could begin writing in their own dialects. The existence of colloquial Aramaic varieties is indicative of a diglossic situation during the time of Achaemenids. At the oral level, there was a multiplicity of dialects that differed significantly one from another. These are the linguistic predecessors of later autonomous languages. On the written level, however, there was only one register that was codified for universal use – Imperial Aramaic. For the most part, non-standardized Aramaic dialects have extremely meager written attestation, but on rare occasion, there are peculiar features preserved in manuscripts that allow us to better understand the development of later Aramaic dialects such as Mandaic.²⁹⁵ We contend that Aramaic speakers actively practiced diglossia, as they needed to be competent in at least two registers of their language.

In order to understand diglossia within Aramaic, we must first direct our attention to the origins and development of the standard variety. In all diglossic languages – Biblical Hebrew, Arabic, German, among others – the oral vernaculars occupy a lower position in the linguistic hierarchy, and at the pedestal is the universal standard language. The form of Aramaic codified and promoted by the Achaemenids is known as “Official Aramaic” or “Imperial Aramaic” (from the German *Reicharamäisch*),²⁹⁶ and its history began in Babylonia, where a local dialect of Aramaic began to gain traction, eventually superseding Akkadian and assuming the position of a lingua franca.²⁹⁷ While the precise source from which the standard variety was derived remains

²⁹⁵ Matthew Morgenstern, “Diachronic Studies in Mandaic.” *Orientalia* 79 (2010): 506.

²⁹⁶ Jonas C. Greenfield, "The dialects of early Aramaic." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 37 (1978): 396.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 396.

unclear, there are several existing theories in scholarship that attempt to explain the origins of Imperial Aramaic. Some scholars believe it to have been based on the standard Babylonian Aramaic learned and adopted by educated Persians.²⁹⁸ In contrast, Klaus Beyer in his monograph claims that there is no attestation of the original source dialect and writes that “this so-called Imperial Aramaic is based on an otherwise unknown written form of Ancient Aramaic from Babylonia.”²⁹⁹ The standardization of Aramaic began with the Assyrians and was rooted in practicality, as a common language was needed to unite a linguistically diverse population. The gradual emergence of Imperial Aramaic as the lingua franca of the region resulted in the displacement of other languages (such as Hebrew and Akkadian) and the suppression of colloquial Aramaic vernaculars. However, to fully appreciate the impact of Aramaic’s standardization and the consolidation of the Imperial variety, one must first examine its history and study its progression under the reign of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians.

Diglossia and bilingualism would become the new realities for numerous speech communities across the Ancient Near East as a result of Aramaic’s standardization. Among the groups of individuals impacted were likely Judean priests and administrators in Jerusalem during the Persian Period, who became doubly diglossic, possessing knowledge of two registers of Hebrew and two registers of Aramaic. The following section will illustrate the century-long process, beginning with the Assyrians and extending beyond the Persians, which resulted in Aramaic becoming a diglossic tongue.

²⁹⁸ Steven A. Kaufman, “Aramaic” in *The Semitic Languages*, ed. Robert Hetzron, (London: Routledge, 1997), 115.

²⁹⁹ Klaus Beyer, *The Aramaic language: its distribution and subdivisions*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 14-15.

A History of Aramaic Before and During Linguistic Standardization: Its Development into a Diglossic Language

Aramaic was standardized because it was intended to serve as a lingua franca for the Near East. The earliest rulers to take active steps in promoting Aramaic as a universal language were the Assyrians, who originally used Akkadian as their primary language. Although Akkadian commanded enormous prestige, it proved impractical as a language of the masses, as its cuneiform writing system was formidable and difficult to master. In contrast, the Aramaic script was comparatively simpler, consisting of only a handful of graphemes. This naturally resulted in Aramaic being the more favorable alternative for a lingua franca for the empire,³⁰⁰ in spite of the preeminent position which Akkadian continued to occupy. The use of Aramaic was originally out of practical motives; the Assyrians wished to impose a language that would be more readily accessible to the masses. The language served as a tool to expedite the political maneuvers of the Empire, and its use was closely related to the economic and social interests of the Assyrians in the western fringes of its territory, such as the Levant region.³⁰¹

Initially, the promotion of Aramaic only occurred as a result of calculated practicality on the part of the Assyrian conquerors. The rich literary tradition of Akkadian coupled with the well-established system of scribal training and cultivation in Mesopotamia are evidence of the deeply ingrained importance of Akkadian in Assyrian society, thereby protracting the linguistic transition to Aramaic. Akkadian was not repudiated overnight in favor of Aramaic; in fact, the

³⁰⁰ Chul-hyun Bae, "Aramaic as a Lingua Franca During the Persian Empire," *Journal of Universal Language* 5 (2005), 18.

³⁰¹ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 84.

opposite is true. There is little question that up until the eighth century B.C.E., the vast majority of communication in the Assyrian empire was in Akkadian.³⁰² The vastness of the textual corpus of Akkadian is not the only evidence of its perennial influence in ancient Assyrian society – translations of letters have brought to light that, before standardization, Aramaic was viewed with disdain from the ruling class. King Sargon vehemently opposed the usage of Aramaic in formal communications, both due to the arrogance (as Akkadian was the prestige tongue) as well as security (since missive written in the Aramaic script was much more easily decipherable).³⁰³ Given the intensity and duration of scribal education, it is by no means surprising that “Assyrian linguistic ideology associated elite scribal training specifically with cuneiform writing as opposed to the more mundane alphabetic Aramaic writing system.”³⁰⁴ Compared to Aramaic, Akkadian was the language of prestige, one that required years of formal scribal education in order to achieve mastery.

In spite of initial resistance and cultural disdain to the introduction of Aramaic, the language eventually began to occupy a significant role and vied with its more prestigious predecessor for linguistic hegemony – at least in certain parts of the Empire. Hayim Tadmor writes, “There appears to be some evidence that in the western parts of the Empire, Aramaic served as the language of diplomacy and administration alongside of, or instead of Akkadian.”³⁰⁵

³⁰² Simo Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press), XV.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, XVI.

³⁰⁴ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 84.

³⁰⁵ Hayim Tadmor, “The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact.” In *Mesopotamien und Seine Nachbarn*, ed. H.J. Nissen and J. Renger (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1982), 449-470.

Given the demographics of the western half of the Empire, it is unsurprising that Aramaic emerged as the common language, co-existing side by side or, in some cases, even replacing Akkadian. The western regions of Assyrian-occupied territory were inhabited largely by native Arameans,³⁰⁶ and their language began to exert an increasing amount of influence even before it was made official. It is, therefore, important to emphasize that Aramaic did not ascend to a status of preeminence immediately, nor did it displace its linguistic predecessor. Rulers such as Sargon disparaged Aramaic during its advent and were affronted by its use in a formal document. At first, the use of Aramaic is concentrated in the western areas of the Assyrian Empire, but its local importance would soon grow, the effects of which would become irreversible and would lead to Aramaic becoming a diglossic language.

Aramaic's predominance in the western regions was ensued by its eventual adoption across a wider geographical expanse and all social strata, including by the elite ruling class. Although Aramaic was originally promoted for the affairs of the empire among non-native scribes, the hegemony of the language became an inevitable reality by the end of the seventh century, at which point all members of the ruling class, including the royal family, became bilingual, having functional proficiency in both Aramaic and Akkadian.³⁰⁷ The increasingly common phenomenon of bilingualism in the Empire is corroborated by inscriptional evidence uncovered and deciphered by scholars. One of the notable inscriptions is the Tel-Fekheriye text (9th century B.C.E), the content of which is written in parallel Akkadian cuneiform and Aramaic

³⁰⁶ Hayim Tadmor, "On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," in *Near Eastern Studies Dedicated to H.I.H Prince Takahito Mikasa on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. H. Mori, H. Ogawa and M. Yokishawa (Harrassowitz, 1991), 419-423.

³⁰⁷ Simo Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004), 5-22.

alphabetic script. The discovery of this engraving has significant implications for our understanding of the linguistic situation of the time. Its existence with duplicate Aramaic-Akkadian renderings reveals that bilingualism was an emerging phenomenon, if not already the norm, in the western periphery of the Empire, perhaps as early as the ninth century B.C.E.,³⁰⁸ at least one century before the installation of the language as an official tongue in the Empire. Although the erecting of royal monuments in the prestigious Akkadian language had symbolic significance and served as a means to assert the power of the ruling Assyrian elites,³⁰⁹ the growing influence of the Aramaic language necessitated the translation of the text at Tel-Fekheriye into a language understandable to a large number of the local population. Although Aramaic had not yet been formally standardized, the presence of Aramaic on an Assyrian royal inscription constitutes a subtle recognition of its increasing importance. The Tel-Fekheriyeh inscription might represent an early attempt to establish an unofficial standard of Aramaic, at a time when Akkadian was still a language of prestige in the empire.

Moreover, pictorial remains also provide evidence of the gradual linguistic transformation underway in the Ancient Near East. Drawings of scribes at work depict the users employing two different types of writing technology. For instance, a wooden tablet is sometimes juxtaposed with a parchment scroll (e.g., the Bar-Rakib inscription from the 8th century).³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Tadmor, "On The Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," 419

³⁰⁹ Barbara Nevling Porter, "Language, Audience, and Impact in Imperial Syria" in *Language and Culture in the Near East*, ed. S. Izre'el and R. Drory, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 51-72

³¹⁰ Tadmor, "On The Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," 419



Figure 2: A photograph of the Bar-Rakib inscription with a scribe holding a writing tablet

The depictions of different types of material culture are significant. The two competing writing systems of the time each required distinct materials for the purposes of copying, transmitting, and recording information. Akkadian cuneiform would be engraved onto tablets (hence the characteristic “wedge-marks”), while Aramaic writing appeared on papyrus documents. The representation of both in pictorial artifacts reveals the permeation of Aramaic and its alphabetic script into the administrative realm of the Empire. As previously mentioned, Aramaic did not enjoy the same prestige as Akkadian, nor was it supported by the same rich literary tradition and legacy; however, its administrative utility made it an appealing choice for a potential empire-wide lingua franca. The Tel-Fekheriye inscription together with the artistic portrayals of scribal culture are early clues of the increasing importance of Aramaic, long before it was conferred official status. The bilingual nature of the text and the diversity of the material culture are two key pieces of evidence in our reconstruction of the changing linguistic landscape of the Ancient Near East.

Although the use of Aramaic was viewed with skepticism by members of the ruling class, it would eventually be officially adopted as an imperial lingua franca and standardized for widespread use. One of the earliest forms of state-sponsored nationalism occurred in the reform to the scribal education system to incorporate elements of Aramaic writing. Previously, scribes in ancient Mesopotamia were subject to a rigorous and grueling training regimen that lasted for years in order to achieve mastery of the prestigious but convoluted cuneiform writing system.³¹¹ However, as Aramaic increasingly gained traction – first throughout the western flanks of the Empire and later more broadly – a new kind of scribe emerged: one which specialized in issuing and transcribing communications in the Aramaic language.³¹² This novelty of the Aramaic-writing scribe was granted official state recognition in the form of the innovation of a new logogram to represent the occupation and its specific duties.³¹³ The Assyrians began to distinguish between two types of scribes and their respective roles and functions. The first type was the traditional scribe who was cultivated and educated for years in the art of Akkadian cuneiform writing. They specialized in the writing of cuneiform texts and were known as the *tupšaru*. The *tupšaru* were highly prolific and versatile, and the scope of their production ranged from literary texts to more mundane administrative documents.³¹⁴ In contrast, Aramaic scribes, known as *sepīru*,³¹⁵ were restricted to only administrative writing. Therefore, although the state

³¹¹ Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

³¹² Laurie Pearce, "Sepiru and LU.ABA: Scribes of the Last First Millennium" in *Languages and Cultures in Contact*, ed. K van Lerberghe, K. and G. Voet (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 355.

³¹³ Schniedewind, *A Social history of Hebrew*, 87.

³¹⁴ Pearce, "Sepiru and LU," 355-368.

³¹⁵ Tadmor, "On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," 420.

continued to hold Akkadian and members educated in its literary tradition in high regard, it also recognized the increasing significance of Aramaic and officially recognized and designated occupations for individuals working in that language. Aramaic scribes, although they generally did not engage in the production of works in the literary genre, held a crucial role in the administrative functions of the empire, and Aramaic appeared in military communications as well as in economic documents from the royal court.³¹⁶ For example, the Nimrud Wine Lists from the early eighth century testify to the role of Aramaic in record-keeping – in this case, it lists the names of individuals who received wine portions.³¹⁷ The emergence of the *sepīru* in the scribal community together with the growing visibility of Aramaic in administrative documents reveal that the language was becoming increasingly important in the Assyrian Empire.

Together with the rise of Aramaic to great prominence in the realms of imperial documentation and administration came a marked increase in bilingualism as a phenomenon across the Empire. The Tel-Fekheriye inscription was cited as one of the earliest examples of the dual usage of cuneiform writing and the alphabetic script. Around one century after the dating of the text, the Aramaic language had achieved a status of widespread popularity to that point that knowledge of it (in addition to traditional cuneiform writing) became requisite in certain areas of the empire. It became a necessity for scribes in the capitals and urban centers of the empire to attain proficiency in not one but two forms of writing.³¹⁸ The emerging necessity of bilingualism

³¹⁶ Tadmor, “Aramaization,” 421.

³¹⁷ Tadmor, “Aramaization.” c.f. Wilson, James Vincent Kinnier. *The Nimrud wine lists: a study of men and administration at the Assyrian capital in the eighth century BC. Vol. 1.* British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1972.

³¹⁸ Tadmor, “On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire,” 421

can be attested in examination of the Neo-Assyrian inscriptional corpus. For instance, in the Akkadian writings from the Neo-Assyrian epoch, we find explicit mentions of Aramaic letters (*egirtu armetu*),³¹⁹ showing the abundance of Aramaic language sources. Even on clay tablets (the material on which cuneiform writing appears) one sees the insertion of Aramaic annotations and even summaries alongside the Akkadian text.³²⁰ Hayim Tadmor contends that such texts constitute the work of a single author, fluent in both languages.³²¹ The influence of Aramaic permeates numerous writings and documents, indicating that the scribal education system, which had previously emphasized training in cuneiform, had to be reformed to reflect the linguistic and social changes. The expansion of the required scribal skillset to accommodate an increasingly bilingual population stands in glaring contrast to the previous mono-literate educational system of Mesopotamia and represents a sweeping transformation to the linguistic landscape of the Assyrian Empire. With the imperial adoption of Aramaic, the role of the scribe went beyond the traditional task of copying and transcribing texts; scribes also served as translators and experts,³²² in addition to performing traditional tasks.

One hundred and twenty years after the discovery of the first major bilingual inscription at Tel-Fekheriye, Aramaic finally received the conferral of the official status it long deserved and recognition for its role in uniting a multifarious population, and this came after another

³¹⁹ Drawnel, Henryk. "Between Akkadian 'ṬUPŠARRŪTU' and Aramaic ספר: Some Notes on the Social Context of the Early Enochic Literature." *Revue De Qumrân*, vol. 24, no. 3 (95), 2010, 373–403.

³²⁰ J. Naveh, *The Development of the Aramaic Scripts*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings, V/I (1970), 16-17.

³²¹ Tadmor, "On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," 422

³²² Henryk, "Between Akkadian 'ṬUPŠARRŪTU' and Aramaic ספר," 374.

successful expansion of the Empire to incorporate regions west of the Euphrates River.³²³ As the population embraced Aramaic as their common language, official writings had to be made understandable to them. Diverse ethnic groups were unified with a common language that became central to their identity as imperial subjects. Aramaic enjoyed the obvious advantage of being more easily accessible to the populace. The language was able to successfully revolutionize the conducting of diplomacy and administrative documentation because of the general ease and facility of mastering the writing system, compared to the formidable task of memorizing hundreds of cuneiform signs.

The use of Aramaic in official documents together with government-granted recognition of a new type of scribe are key elements of the state-sponsored nationalism giving support to the language. Originally, state-sponsored nationalism of Aramaic was not explicit. During the early years of Assyrian rule, Aramaic operated without official status, yet the power it wielded in unifying people and facilitating communication was too great to go unrecognized. 2 Kings 18:26 is an excellent example of how the members of the Judean elite were competent in Aramaic already by the 8th century B.C.E because of its utility as a language of international diplomacy.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיָקִים בֶּן-חֶלְקִיָּהוּ וְשִׁבְנָה וַיּוֹאָח אֶל-רַב־שָׁקָה, דְּבַר-נָא אֶל עֲבָדַיךָ אַרְמִית--כִּי שְׂמָעִים אֲנִינּוּ

Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh: 'Speak, I beg you to your servants in the Aramean language - 2 Kings 18:26

2 Kings 18:26 provides evidence that the Aramaic language by this point had become the “customary language of diplomatic negotiations in the West.”³²⁴ Even though Aramaic was not

³²³ Ibid., 374.

³²⁴ Tadmor, “On The Role of Aramaic,” 423.

intelligible to the majority of the people in Judah, it had become a lingua franca for the upper classes, with individuals learning the language in order to facilitate interethnic community.

As 2 Kings 18:26 shows, bilingualism became increasingly common, including among members of the scribal class, even before the language was official recognized. The later granting of recognition to the language secured its place in perpetuity as the *de facto* and *de jure* lingua franca of the ancient Near East. However, it is important to point out that while the Assyrians played a crucial role in the ascent of Aramaic to official status, it is under their later successors – the Achaemenids – that the language was consolidated and codified. Darius I in 500 B.C.E. gave official status to the language throughout the Empire,³²⁵ where it would dominate even beyond the collapse of Persian hegemony in the Near East.

The linguistic standardization of Aramaic was therefore not the result of a single event, but rather it was an ongoing process that gradually took place over the course of several centuries. Furthermore, one should note that language standardization usually does not occur by itself, but rather it is frequently the concomitant of another event of social and political significance. In the case of Aramaic, being granted official status as an empire-wide language was a propelling force underlying its standardization (together with politics and economy). This marks the beginning of a process, where Aramaic would become increasingly diglossic. Formerly referring to a group of loosely related Central Semitic vernaculars, Aramaic now had an established set of grammatical and lexical conventions that dictated how it was to be used in formal occasions. These helped to unite speakers of disparate speech forms, yet it created a rift between the way language was spoken and the way it was to be transcribed, thereby introducing

³²⁵ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 14.

diglossia into the speech communities where it predominated. Speakers would learn Imperial Aramaic for the purposes of writing, while continually retaining their own natural speech patterns that likely differed from what they were taught formally. In these circumstances, increased language consciousness would be the natural result, as speakers had to adapt to radical changes in the way they were allowed to use language.

The Extent of Differences between Imperial Aramaic and Oral Vernaculars

The establishment of Imperial Aramaic as the empire-wide standard led to significant changes in the linguistic landscape. Because Imperial Aramaic monopolized literary and textual production, limited attestation of oral vernaculars during the Achaemenid Period exists. With the standardization of the language, Aramaic speakers were encouraged to adopt a common form of writing. This is typical of diglossic languages, where speakers of a language choose to employ a codified, universally accepted register for the purposes of writing and formal communication and refrain from writing in a way that is directly representative or that closely resembles their native linguistic variety. By this count, Aramaic would qualify for classification as a diglossic language.

The Imperial register of Aramaic was apparently derived from a spoken dialect native to the eastern half of the empire (Babylonia region). While this would have made it easier for speakers around that area to learn the standardized variety, it would have simultaneously resulted in significant disparities between the formal standard variety and the oral vernaculars that predominate in the western regions. In fact, the linguistic divergence between East and West can be traced back to pre-imperial times. Aramaic scholar Klaus Beyer suggests the primordial dichotomy of the language, dividing “Old Aramaic” (pre-dating the Assyrians) to at least two

separate branches: Western and Eastern.³²⁶ Together with other scholars, he contends that these were not just oral vernaculars of the people but that Western and Eastern Aramaic were two distinct standardized languages. The former originated in the region of the Levant and supposedly bears orthographical resemblance to the Phoenician language.³²⁷ The two dialect approach posited by Beyer represents an attempt to elucidate the linguistic complexities that have existed since time immemorial and to obviate the fallacy of assuming that Aramaic operated as a uniform linguistic entity at any one point during its existence.

However, although Beyer's view does represent an attempt to reconstruct the dialectological situation of Aramaic, his approach is problematic because it seems to conflate writing and speech, while simplifying vernacular dialects based on the dichotomy between East and West. Furthermore, dialects like Samalian resist easy classification under the model. Stephen Kaufman proposes a multi-group model of Old Aramaic dialectology: Standard Syrian (Western), Samalian, Fakhariyah, Mesopotamian, Deir Alla.³²⁸ Kaufman's model is arguably better than Beyer's because it allows for greater flexibility and does not attempt to classify all varieties of Old Aramaic into a flawed East-West taxonomy. In Kaufman's taxonomy, "idiosyncratic" dialects, such as Deir Alla (which some might not consider to be Aramaic at all),³²⁹ are given their own category rather than being forced to fit into a dichotomous classification.

³²⁶ Ibid., 11.

³²⁷ Ibid., 13-14, also c.f. R. Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10-8 Jahrhundert vor Christus*, (Wiesbaden, 1969).

³²⁸ Kaufman, "Aramaic" in *The Semitic Languages*, 114.

³²⁹ There is an enormous amount of debate regarding the linguistic classification of the Deir Allah Text, and scholars dispute whether it is even Aramaic. See Jo Ann Hackett, "The Dialect of the Plaster Text

Whether or not a dichotomy existed between east and west, as Beyer proposes, or if the situation was much more complicated, referring to existing taxonomies of Old Aramaic is useful for understanding the dialect situation of the language. The inscriptional evidence shows that there were clear differences between various dialects prior to the rise of the Assyrian Empire. One would assume that these differences increased with the passage of time and that by the time standardization did occur, the oral dialects would have significantly diverged from the Babylonian standard version.

Nonetheless, in spite of the overt dissonance between various colloquial forms and the standard language, Imperial Aramaic prevailed as the dominant form of communication. In fact, Imperial Aramaic as a written language evinced such homogeneity that it is often extremely difficult to know the geographic origin of a document. The uniformity of written Aramaic was remarkable. Non-native errors and the permeation of loanwords are the only hints which allow scholars to more accurately conjecture the source nation of a particular text.³³⁰ Consequently, diglossia must have been an inevitable reality for speakers of the divergent eastern varieties who adopted the Imperial standard as their written language. This is unsurprising as a common feature of pluricentric languages is that certain speech communities have to yield and conform to state-established norms, often meaning that they are required to either give up their own speech form altogether or to restrict its usage to a particular context. Just as natives of Swiss German or colloquial Arabic maintain a linguistic duality in their daily activities, speakers of western

from Tell Deir'Alla." *Orientalia* 53, no.1 (1984): 57-65. Hackett argues that there are some very Canaanite features in the Deir Alla text, such as the verbal system. It is the presence of these features that "suggest a classification...that is closer to South Canaanite rather than the now familiar 'peculiar' Aramaic."

³³⁰ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 18-19.

Aramaic likely used their own dialects in speech, while conforming to the empire-wide convention of writing mostly or solely in the imperial register prescribed by the Assyrians (and later, the Achaemenids). Diglossia must have been a daily reality for speakers of Aramaic dialects that differed tremendously from the formal register they had to learn for practical reasons.

Evidence of the persistence of oral vernaculars is seen in the emergence of other Aramaic-based languages (Syriac, Mandaic, Palmyrean, among others) that developed their own independent scripts and literary corpuses after the fall of the Persian Empire. It was not until almost 200 B.C.E that these colloquial Aramaic dialects transitioned from being mostly oral to written. This is when we first witness the emergence of Old Syriac in its birthplace of Edessa,³³¹ a settlement in a geographical area that would have lain in the eastern periphery of previous empires.³³² Aramaic vernacular dialects were not deterred by the state-sponsored imposition of Imperial Aramaic as the universal standard, and in fact they continued to survive centuries after the dissolution of the Achaemenid Empire. Their survival into late antiquity confirms that diglossia was a common phenomenon for speakers of certain Aramaic vernaculars during the time of imperial rule. While the textual record from the Achaemenid Empire is linguistically relatively homogeneous, the spoken languages of different Aramaic speech communities were actively spoken and continued to develop and diverge. Even after codification and imperial-wide imposition, many oral vernaculars from the East persisted in speech (even though written attestation is limited), and evidence for the continued use and preservation of these varieties

³³¹ H.J.W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*. (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 1.

³³² Amir Harrak, "The Ancient Name of Edessa." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51, no.3 (1992): 209–214.

comes from the dialects that descended from them after the Imperial epoch. Mandaic, for instance, is classified as an Eastern Aramaic language and has evolved in an entirely different direction compared to the Imperial variety.³³³

The Babylonian-centric nature of standardized Aramaic has noteworthy implications. Most notably, this indicates that speakers of non-Babylonian varieties may have found themselves linguistically isolated, as the Empire adopted a standard variety lexically and morphologically distinct from their native vernacular. The greater the degree of linguistic separation between different vernaculars, the greater the difficulty in homogenizing the linguistic landscape. German sociolinguistics may be useful for comparison. In former West Germany, for example, the sociolinguistic and dialectological concern with how varying degrees of disparity between standard *Hochdeutsch* and different oral vernaculars resulted in the publication of the *Dialekt-Hochdeutsch Kontrastiv*, a booklet to assess each dialect's magnitude of linguistic deviation from standard.³³⁴ In some regions, the dialect is quite distinct, such as the Low German-speaking areas of the country. German linguists consider this an area where one witnesses the complete separateness of dialect and standard; in this dialect-dominant realm, standard German is equally distant for the local population as a foreign language.³³⁵ This is significant for understanding language consciousness. Previously, we have argued that bilingualism heightens linguistic awareness in speakers because of the way speakers must

³³³ Charles G. Häberl, "Iranian Scripts for Aramaic Languages: The Origin of the Mandaic Script." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. no. 341 (2006): 53–62.

³³⁴ Stephen Barbour, "Dialects and the Teaching of a Standard Language: Some West German Work." *Language in Society* 16, no. 2, (1987): 227–243.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

navigate and balance both languages. However, in some cases of diglossia, the differences separating the native dialect of a speaker and the written standard are so great that speakers who are required to acquire literacy become quasi-bilingual, having to learn a second set of vocabulary words, adjust their phonology, and alter grammatical structures. A literate speaker would therefore have to be conscious of the changes made when adopting the formal register of the language.

Implications of Diglossia for the Aramaic-speaking World

It is impossible to fully know and reconstruct the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Aramaic-speaking realm under imperial rule. Given the great dialectal and ethnic diversity of the sundry speech communities under the subjugation of various Near Eastern empires, one must presume that the situation was variable and dependent on numerous factors, including the influence of regional languages and the distance between the local Aramaic dialect and written Imperial standard. Because standard Aramaic was highly derivative of the Babylonian vernacular, the transition to the written language was significantly smoother for interlocutors of those regional varieties. In fact, if differences between the written and spoken languages were minimal, this would likely not even constitute a case of diglossia. Charles A. Ferguson argues that spoken English, for example, does not form a diglossic relationship with its written counterpart, in spite of some lexical differences, as the gap between the two registers is not so pronounced.³³⁶ Likewise, for speakers of Aramaic varieties closely related to the standard, the adoption of the written language would only require the replacement of a handful of core

³³⁶ Ferguson, "Diglossia," 334

lexemes, rendering the shift to be rather seamless. However, in other parts of the Empire, where a multiplicity of significant disparate oral varieties predominate in everyday communication, the transition to the Imperial Aramaic would have required drastic modifications to the core vocabulary words as well as morphology.³³⁷

The sociolinguistic dynamics of the great Near Eastern Empires was certainly not homogeneous. To the contrary, it was highly variable and differed significantly across regions and communities. It was dependent on numerous factors – the relative linguistic proximity of the spoken Aramaic dialect to the written form as well as extraneous elements, such as contact with non-Aramaic languages as well as geographic isolation. Some speech communities may have been relatively monolingual and mono-dialectal, while others, by nature of their circumstances, were required to attain competency in multiple tongues and possibly multiple varieties of the same language. Applying Ferguson’s criteria, diglossia only exists when interlocutors are required to make significant changes to their speech by incorporating an otherwise obsolete lexicon and morphological patterns, not simply minor adjustments. Much of the entire grammar and vocabulary of the language is overhauled and replaced with formal equivalents. Speakers of divergent varieties would have needed to force themselves to reject certain morphemes, lexemes, and even phonemes that existed in their native vernacular and to replace them with standardized equivalents. Given the extreme dialectal diversity of spoken Aramaic vernaculars throughout the empire, scribes in certain speech communities would have needed to modify their language patterns minimally to conform to the conventions of the Imperial register, due to the dialects’

³³⁷ This is based on Ferguson’s criteria for diglossic languages in his classic article, in which he argues that the relationship between H and L varieties is characterized by an overt differences between the lexicon and morphology of the two forms. Differences in phonology may range from insignificant to extremely different.

proximity to standard. The changes would be very shallow; diglossia might therefore not be an appropriate description for their linguistic relationship to the prestige variety. Conversely, other dialect speakers in the eastern regions or peripheral areas would have had to completely alter their way of speaking by integrating unfamiliar words and grammatical patterns. The deliberate displacement of core vocabulary and the effort needed on the part of the interlocutors to conform would more likely qualify them as part of a diglossic situation. Diglossia was therefore an unevenly distributed phenomenon throughout the Aramaic-speaking regions under Assyrian and later Achaemenid rule, as the genetic differences between spoken and written Aramaic was highly variable, depending on region and community.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for diglossia to be more extensive in certain areas of a language's geographical scope of influence, where it is the reality for some speakers while nonexistent for others. Ferguson mentions the case of Swiss German; Switzerland belongs to the German-speaking realm, yet its inhabitants' relationship with standard German is significantly different from speakers in other regions. While a speaker of Swiss German would have to make great effort to master and speak standard German, a speaker of the Hanover dialect in the Lower Saxony province of Germany would have to make fewer adjustments and modifications to their speech. This is because their vernacular enjoys a much closer relationship to standard German, with many even viewing the Hanover vernacular to be the home of "correct German."³³⁸

Diglossia is not a ubiquitous phenomenon in the German-speaking world; it is more prominent in certain localities more than others, the direct consequence of the linguistic gulf between standard and oral vernaculars. For instance, the southern and northern regions experience higher levels of

³³⁸ Patrick Stevenson, *Language and German disunity: A sociolinguistic history of East and West in Germany, 1945-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 181.

diglossia, with speakers oscillating between *Hochdeutsch* and their divergent native dialect (Bavarian, Plattdeutsch, etc.). German scholar Peter von Polenz describes diglossia in Germany as follows:

Nur in bestimmten Gebieten (vor allem deutschsprachiger Teil der Schweiz, Südtirol, Norddeutschland) gibt es noch eine scharfe Diglossie mit konsequentem Wechsel zwischen Dialekt und Standard ohne vermittelnde Zwischenstufen.³³⁹

Only in certain provinces (especially in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, South Tyrol, and North Germany) is there still a sharp diglossia with consistent switching between dialect and standard without intermediary levels.

The same could be said for Aramaic during the Persian Period. Although Official Aramaic was rapidly absorbed by vast numbers of scribes and literates as a written language, the amount of diglossia would have varied from region to region, depending on the geographical proximity to Babylonia (and even in Babylonia, it probably increased over time). Although it is impossible for us to fully reconstruct the dialect geography of the Aramaic-speaking realm, comparison to modern diglossic languages like German allow us to have a more accurate and nuanced conceptualization of the linguistic situation in the Ancient Near East. The existence of a common standard written form would inevitably have the effect of linguistically homogenizing the population – but only to a certain extent. As with German, numerous speech communities in the Achaemenid Empire would have continued to retain their native vernacular while simultaneously supplementing their linguistic repertoire by adopting a second register of the

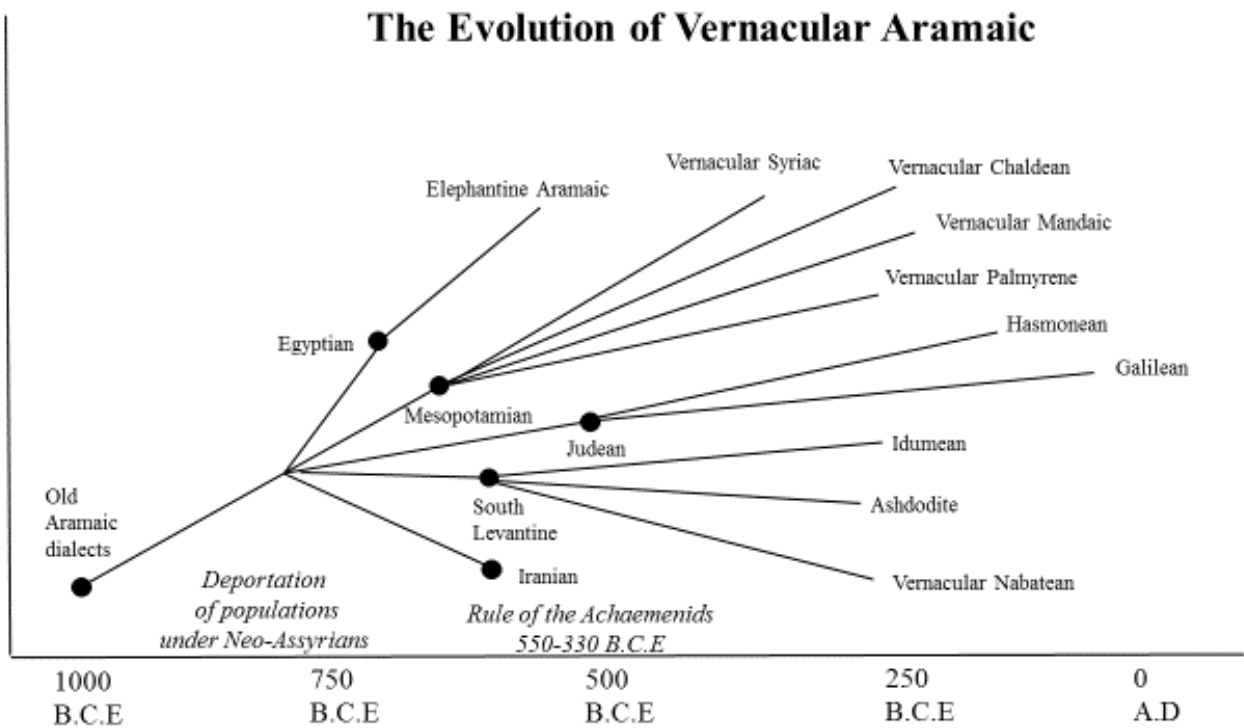
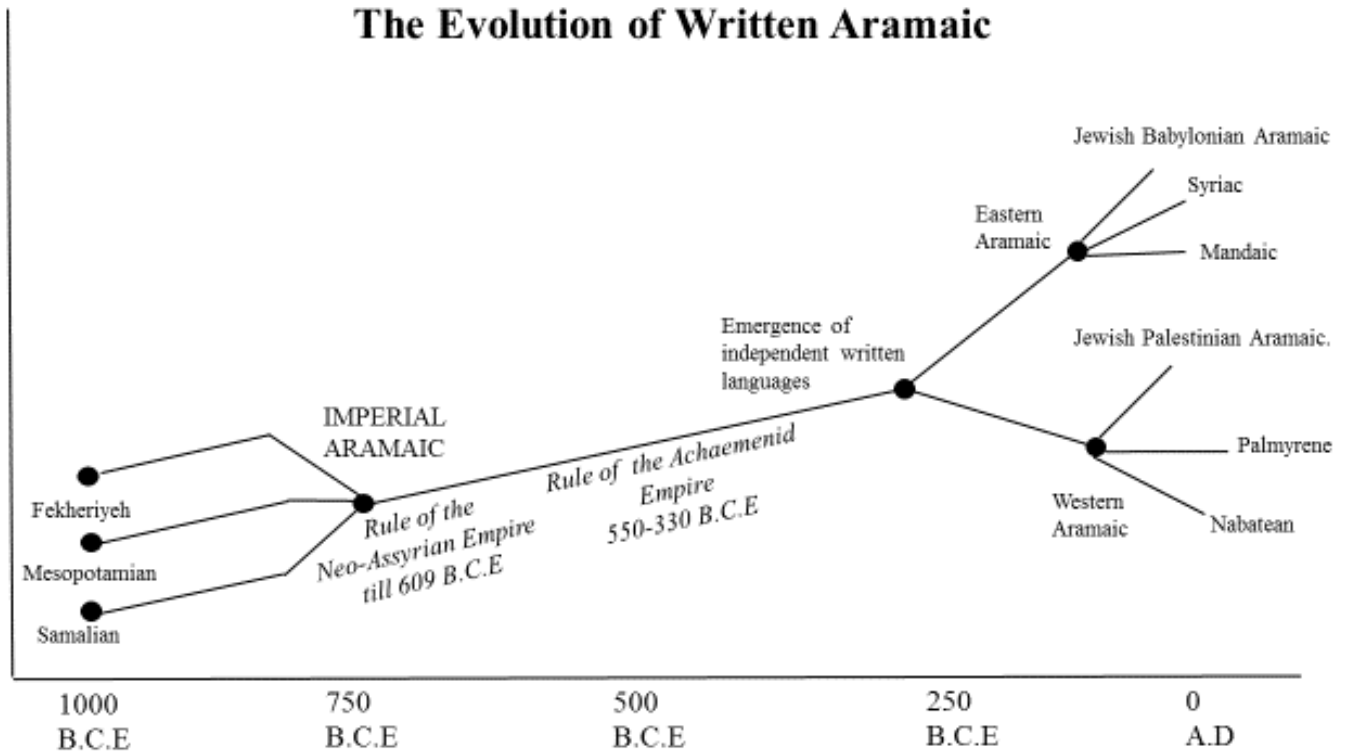
³³⁹ Peter Von Polenz, *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, (New York: de Gruyter, 1999), 459. For a more detailed discussion regarding the current status of diglossia in the German-speaking world, refer to the doctoral dissertation by Heiko Wiggers on the issue, c.f. Wiggers, Heiko. *Reevaluating diglossia: data from Low German*. Diss. 2006. In the third chapter, he addresses the stability of diglossic communities and presents an overview of the situation in present day German and Switzerland. In Germany, many areas have become linguistically homogenized with *Hochdeutsch* predominating in media. However, in the south and the north, individuals continue to cling onto their local dialect, and he argues that this makes Germany a case of *partial diglossia*.

language. We cannot accurately conjecture the extent to which diglossia existed within each region, yet we can assert with relative certainty that there was immense variability in diglossia, with some regions and speech communities being impacted more heavily than others. Some dialects had greater lexical distance from the Achaemenid/Babylonian standard. For speakers of these Aramaic varieties, mastering Imperial Aramaic would require equivalent exertion to learn a foreign language. It is under these conditions that language consciousness emerges as a very powerful force, with speakers becoming increasingly able to differentiate between varieties of the same language. Diglossia – in one form or another – became firmly wedged in the sociolinguistic makeup of the Ancient Near East. Judeans during and after the exile found themselves swept into this linguistic disarray, encountering numerous languages and dialects. Within a short period of time, the community found itself both bilingual and diglossic, navigating an extremely complex network of linguistic varieties on a daily basis. Elevated language consciousness would have been the natural concomitant of such a convoluted linguistic situation.

Evolution of Written Aramaic vs. the Evolution of Vernacular Aramaic

Diglossia becomes more explicit a phenomenon, as differences between the standard written language and oral counterparts become more pronounced. The graphs on the following page illustrate the differences in the evolution between the written and vernacular forms of Aramaic, and how the disparity between the two versions would have grown with the passage of time.

Table 5 and 6: Evolution of Written Aramaic & Evolution of Vernacular Aramaic



The graphs above purposefully juxtapose the evolution of written Aramaic in contrast to vernacular Aramaic. Written records in different Aramaic dialects have revealed that there were numerous written versions of the language before the advent of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. This above graph shows how diversity existed in written Aramaic, and this is consistent with Holger Gzella's view in his monograph, *A Cultural History of Aramaic*:

Aramaic first appeared in written documents in Syria, composed in the alphabetic script, soon after the ninth century B.C.E... Several linguistic varieties used for public display in Eastern, Central, and Northwestern Syria subsequently can be clearly distinguished from neighboring Semitic idioms, such as Hebrew and Phoenician, and among themselves, on the basis of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon.³⁴⁰

However, during the reign of the Achaemenid Empire in 750 B.C.E, the written language was standardized and remained relatively uniform, evolving only gradually with the passage of time. Five centuries later, around 250 B.C.E (long after the dissolution of the Achaemenid Empire), we witness the emergence of independent written languages in the form of Syriac, Mandaic, and others. In contrast, the vernaculars had been evolving continuously from the beginning, diverging from one another. This process was accelerated with territorial expansion and the subsequent development of new speech communities under the Achaemenids. The enormous differences between speech and writing would have resulted in diglossia becoming a norm for Aramaic speech communities under Achaemenid rule.

³⁴⁰ Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 53.

Problems with the Diglossic View of Aramaic

By comparison to other dialect-rich languages like German, we have shown that diglossia would have been a permanent fixture of the linguistic landscape of the Achaemenid Empire. However, embracing the term “diglossic” to delineate the Ancient Near East and the Judean speech community in particular is not an infallible undertaking. The following section of the dissertation will be dedicated to explicating the difficulties with “diglossia” as a label and will raise the possibility that more sophisticated and nuanced terminology is needed to describe the Aramaic-speaking world.

Claiming that the Aramaic-speaking Near East was diglossic may constitute an overly simple approach and betrays a lack of understanding of the linguistic breadth and richness of Aramaic during the Imperial period. The term implies a strict dichotomy within a language and its usage, with an official register existing solely for the purpose of formal written communications and colloquial varieties for speaking of mundane activities (of the H and L variety).³⁴¹ However, diglossia as a term is problematic because it does not do adequate justice to the intermediary varieties that lie somewhere between the two extremes of the spectrum. El-Said Badawi believed that the imposition of the term *diglossia* to delineate the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Arabic-speaking world was untenable, given the extreme vernacular diversity of Arabic as well as the new hybrid speech forms that blend elements from both formal and informal varieties.³⁴² Based on theories regarding Old Aramaic dialectology, it seems that similar complications likely existed in the sociolinguistics of ancient Aramaic both as a diglossic

³⁴¹ Ferguson, “Diglossia,” 327.

³⁴² Badawi, El-Said, *Mustawayat al-`Arabiyya al-mu`asira fi Misr*. (in Arabic). Levels of contemporary Arabic in Egypt (Cairo, Daar al-Ma`arif), 1973.

language and dialectal composite, thereby rendering a precise linguistic taxonomy difficult to achieve. Asserting that Aramaic was diglossic might only be partially accurate. For instance, as illustrated previously, a speaker of a Proto-Syriac variant who used his or her native tongue when communicating in informal settings before consciously switching to Imperial Aramaic to draft a missive would certainly constitute a typical case study for linguistic diglossia. In such a case, the distance and separation between written and spoken, formal and informal, are unequivocal. Nonetheless, it remains questionable if such was the situation throughout all regions of the Empire. Therefore, while we contend that diglossia was a likely phenomenon for certain speech communities under the rule of the Assyrians and Achaemenids, we also raise the possibility that other groups underwent a much more complex linguistic transitions, juggling multiple dialects as well as allowing for the development of new blended speech forms.

Alternative Terminology for Diglossia

One proposed modification to the existing terminology originates from the field of Arabic studies. Arabist Alan S. Kaye suggests that the notion of “multiglossia” might be more suitable to describe the sociolinguistic inner workings of Arabic-speaking communities.³⁴³ Multiglossia connotes the existence of a sociolectal continuum, along which there is no clean and decisive break between the formal register and oral varieties. Such is certainly the case with Arabic, as “there is a continuous transition between standard and colloquial Arabic.”³⁴⁴ On both ends of the spectrum, we have formal standard Arabic and informal colloquial dialects; however, there are

³⁴³ Alan S. Kaye, “Formal vs. Informal in Arabic: Diglossia, Triglossia, Tetraglossia, Etc., Polyglossia — Multiglossia Viewed as a Continuum.” *Zeitschrift Für Arabische Linguistik*, no. 27 (1994): 47–66.

³⁴⁴ Benjamin Hary, “The Importance of the Language Continuum in Arabic Multiglossia” in *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, ed. Alaa Elghibali (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 71.

numerous intermediate categories in between, linguistic alloys that are neither completely formal nor informal but rather contain elements of both. It is the proportion that determines where these intermediary varieties fall along the sociolectal continuum.³⁴⁵ Multiglossia essentially is an expansion of diglossia in order to include a range of hybrid forms that cannot be strictly classified in a binary way. Therefore, it is proposed that the term “multiglossia,” which has arisen in modern sociolinguistic studies of Arabic, be extrapolated and potentially used to describe the Aramaic language and its social roles and functions during the Imperial Period. The primary contention is that the Aramaic language was comprised of more than Imperial Aramaic and spoken dialects. These two – Imperial and colloquial – simply represented opposite ends of the spectrum, yet there was likely mixing between the two extremes, resulting in numerous dialectal permutations.

Although Arabic is not a perfect parallel to Aramaic, drawing a comparison between the two may have some advantages. First of all, the two languages had linguistic dominion over much of the same geographical area at two different points in history. Secondly, both Aramaic and Arabic amassed large numbers of speakers as a result of successful conquests and incorporation of various people groups into greater speech communities. This led to the development of unique oral vernaculars as new Arabic speakers naturally incorporated elements from local languages into their speech, and such was likely the case with Aramaic, as one witnesses from the emergence of various autonomous Aramaic-based languages after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire. Thirdly, a formal register used for writing resulted in the homogeneity of written texts in the case of both tongues. As mentioned previously, the textual

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 72.

corpus of Imperial Aramaic was so linguistically uniform that it is often difficult to assess the origin of a document.³⁴⁶ Likewise, today, a formal questionnaire issued in Egypt is understandable to native speakers in Lebanon because the educated register of the language is uniform across all Arabic-speaking lands.³⁴⁷ The standard forms of Arabic and Aramaic are able to artificially homogenize the communications of people across a wide geographic expanse. However, in both cases, it is the artificiality of this enterprise that leads to multiglossia, with speakers not only retaining their native vernaculars but blending the formal and informal registers in various combinations.

Multiglossia as a Phenomenon within the Judean Speech Community

“Multiglossia” has emerged in scholarly research as an alternative means to describe the complexities of Arabic dialectology. In this dissertation, we wish to extrapolate the terminology from Arabic studies to apply it in elucidating the nature of Aramaic in the Judean community during the Achaemenid period. The term is preferable because it does not assign varieties of the language into binary categories (high and low or standard and colloquial), but rather it allows for the fluidity of language, as language is comprised of numerous intermediary and transitional registers. Therefore, multiglossia seems to be a more appropriate way to frame the convoluted linguistic dynamics of Judean Aramaic speech communities during the time.

³⁴⁶ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 18-19.

³⁴⁷ Zeinab Ibrahim, *Beyond Lexical Variation in Modern Standard Arabic: Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco*. (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 47.

While numerous studies exist regarding the emergence of bilingualism, with many scholars generally assuming that Aramaic largely supplanted Hebrew as the primary spoken and written language,³⁴⁸ less attention has been given to the specific kinds of Aramaic influence on the Hebrew language and literary corpus. Biblical scholars, such as Max Wagner, often brand certain lexical terms, expressions, and neologisms as “Aramaisms.” In particular, Wagner’s monograph *Die Lexikalischen und Grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* is dedicated solely to evaluating the presence of Aramaic features within Old Testament Hebrew.³⁴⁹ Nonetheless, this term itself is too generic, as Judeans were likely influenced by multiple varieties of Aramaic, with the Bible preserving remnants of an Aramaic dialectal variety.³⁵⁰ It is incontrovertible that Aramaic influence was strong, yet which kinds of Aramaic were being used? This is an important question to clarify, as there were various types of Aramaic and numerous dialects. It is likely that the Judean speech community was influenced by multiple strands of Aramaic at both the formal and informal level. For instance, Judeans were presumably educated in the conventions of written Imperial Aramaic, as they were able to use it for the purposes of formal correspondence when drafting letters to the king in Ezra.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*, 40.

³⁴⁹ Max Wagner. *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (Berlin:Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG), 2016.

³⁵⁰ Na'ama Pat-El, “Traces of Aramaic Dialectal Variation in Late Biblical Hebrew.” *Vetus Testamentum* 58, no. 4/5 (2008): 650. In her article, Pat-El proposes the idea of influence from multiple vernaculars of Aramaic: “what follows, I would like to suggest a possible example of Aramaic dialectal variety in the Bible. Such variety can be revealed through dialectology of Aramaic and categorization of grammatical features according to their dialectal distribution.”

³⁵¹ H. G. M. Williamson, “The Aramaic Documents in Ezra Revisited.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 59, no. 1 (2008): 41–62. In his article, Williamson argues that the letters embedded in the book of Ezra have characteristics typical of Achaemenid Aramaic, dismissing arguments that the Aramaic of the book was composed during a later time period (such as the Hellenic time period).

Nonetheless, in daily communication, it is quite plausible that Judeans and local peoples in the Levant region would have spoken a vernacular that differed from the written version of Aramaic found in the Ezra documents. A notable example of this would be the Ashodidte, mentioned in Nehemiah 13:24, which was likely an Aramaic offshoot spoken off the coast of Philistia during the Second Temple Period.³⁵² Furthermore, the standard and colloquial varieties may have intersected to form an intermediary variety that represents an admixture of both extremes of the sociolectal continuum.

Bernard Spolsky describes the sociolinguistic situation of the Judeans as one of “triglossia,” where literary Hebrew, vernacular Hebrew, and vernacular Aramaic co-existed in the same speech community,³⁵³ and he ascribes different functions to each variety. This is closer to what we are trying to argue, as he argues that there must have been some kind of interplay between all three linguistic varieties. However, we propose an expansion to this model by contending that Imperial written Aramaic must also have been at play in this complex linguistic interchange, as Judean scribes like Ezra likely received formal education in the written language during their Exile. Therefore, multiple varieties were in contact (and possibly in conflict) with one another among the Judean returnees from exile. Although the linguistic evidence is not conclusive, it is conceivable that Aramaic, based on our understanding of other dialect-rich languages like Arabic, was far more complex and that its speakers were multiglossic, switching freely between the standard Imperial Aramaic and their native vernacular as well as occasionally interlacing elements from both registers in their speech.

³⁵² For further reading on Ashdodite, see Chapter 6 of the dissertation.

³⁵³ Spolsky, *Languages of the Jews*, 30.

Biblical Aramaic as an Example of Multiglossia

The following section raises the possibility that the written Aramaic of the Bible constitutes a case of multiglossia, with the language of the text not being a pristine version of the official standard register prescribed for empire-wide usage. Instead, the Aramaic of the Bible is believed by some to contain features characteristic of colloquial dialects, indicating a degree of mixing that occurred between the standard and the informal varieties. For instance, the book of Ezra is internally inconsistent in the way it uses the second and third person plural possessive marker. The typical Achaemenid form is כן/הן with the final *nūn*, in contrast to earlier forms כם/הם that end with *mem* are commonly attested in the documents from Elephantine.³⁵⁴ However, Ezra contains a mix of both forms. The following table provides examples of some of the morphological inconsistencies that have been found in Ezra:

Table 6: הון vs. הום in Biblical Aramaic

| Hebraic Equivalent and Translation | Forms Consistent with Standard Achaemenid Aramaic (<i>nūn</i>) | Forms that Deviate from Standard Achaemenid Aramaic (<i>mem</i>) |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| “upon them” עליהם | בשם אלה ישראל עליהון - עזרא 5:1 | לא שליט למרמא עליהם - עזרא 7:24 |
| “to them” להם | ומדח בלו ובלה, מתניהב להון - עזרא 4:20 | ולכם מהודעין - עזרא 7:24 |
| “of them (m.)” הם- | מתני פחת עבר נהרה ושטר בונני וכןותהון - עזרא 5:3 ומנחתהון ונסכיהון ותקרר המו - עזרא 7:17 | לבית אלקהם די בירושלם - עזרא 7:16 ועין אלקהם הנות על-שבי יהודיא - עזרא 5:5 |

³⁵⁴ Williamson, “The Aramaic Documents in Ezra Revisited,” 55.

Table 6 shows how the author oscillates between the two forms (ending with *nūn* and *mem* respectively) without apparent rhyme or reason. We contend that this represents an admixture of linguistic varieties. Another example of inconsistent morphology includes the assimilation of *nūn* in initial *nūn* (I-n) verbs. In Ezra, sometimes the letter is assimilated, yet sometimes it remains.

Table 7: The Treatment of Initial *nūn* Verbs in Ezra

| Verbal Root | Occurrence | Status of the <i>nūn</i> |
|-------------|--|----------------------------|
| נ פ ל | ושָׁאָר חֲשׁוּחַת בַּיִת אֶלְהֵךְ דִּי יִפֹּל לְךָ – עזרא 7:20 | ASSIMILATED |
| נ ת ן | וְהִלֵּךְ לָא יִתְּנִינֵךְ – עזרא 4:13 | RETAINED |
| נ ש א | שֵׁא אֲזַל - עזרא 5:15 | ASSIMILATED ³⁵⁵ |
| נ פ ק | בּוּכְדִנְצָר הַנִּפְק מִן-הַיְכָלָא דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם – עזרא 5:1 | RETAINED |

The inconsistent treatment of the *nūn* is yet another curious feature in the morphology of Aramaic. We posit that this lack of internal consistency is potential evidence for multiglossia, as authors were influenced by both the formal and informal varieties of the language. Although Ezra is ostensibly written in Imperial Aramaic, there are clear permeations from non-standard varieties of the language. The evidence above shows a fusion of both registers, with authors using some intermediary variety of the language. The inconsistencies found within the book of Ezra make its Aramaic seem to be a case of multiglossia. This can be compared to the existence

³⁵⁵ Franz Rosenthal, *Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, (Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), 47. Rosenthal writes that, as a rule, the *nūn* drops in the imperative

of multiglossia in modern-day Arabic, with speakers using intermediary varieties, with different proportions of formal and informal language. However, in order to further evaluate the validity of this theory, one must now examine the preexisting arguments regarding the classification of Biblical Aramaic.

The Aramaic of the Biblical corpus has proven to be quite problematic and presents numerous challenges for scholars. The language of the books of Daniel and Ezra cannot be attributed to a single stratum of Aramaic due to linguistic peculiarities, resulting in much contention regarding the relative dating of these texts. Klaus Beyer argues that these books were originally composed during the Achaemenid era in the universalized formal register of Imperial Aramaic.³⁵⁶ Although Beyer dates the books to the imperial stage of the language, during which the written language was uniform across the vast territories of the empire, he recognizes the linguistic deviations from the strict standard that homogenized most written communications of the time. He attributes these, however, to a later Hebrew substrate that permeated the books of Ezra and Nehemiah with the adoption of the Masoretic reading in the first century A.D.³⁵⁷ Nonetheless, his argument for an Imperial-era composition of the Biblical books is significant for the purposes of our study. Other scholars such as R.D. Wilson make a similar claim regarding the text and the time of its creation: “We are abundantly justified in concluding that the dialect of Daniel...must have been used at or near Babylon at a time not long after the founding of the Persian empire.”³⁵⁸ Although this claim remains highly controversial and rejected by others in

³⁵⁶ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 19.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁵⁸ Robert Dick Wilson, “The Aramaic of Daniel” in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, (1912), 304.

the scholarly community,³⁵⁹ a Babylonian/Persian Period dating would raise the possibility of multiglossia as the linguistic reality within the Aramaic-speaking community.

Much of the reason for the controversy surrounding the chronology of the books of Daniel and Ezra is the discernible linguistic inconsistencies within the texts. There is great disparity in opinions regarding the dating. While the aforementioned scholars believe the book to belong to the Imperial era, others, such as Baumgartner, believe it is significantly later, placing it in the 2nd or 3rd centuries B.C.E.³⁶⁰ Cowley, conversely, recognizes the linguistic similarities between Biblical Aramaic and the Papyri of Elephantine, implying an early dating.³⁶¹ Consensus has been impossible to achieve, as scholars have identified linguistic peculiarities and have different interpretations of the data, leading to variance regarding which time period Biblical Aramaic belongs to. As shown above, the Aramaic language present in the Bible does not entirely conform to Imperial Aramaic, as it has extraneous elements that seem to occur in later strata of the language, leading to an endless polemic regarding its precise dating. This dissertation does not purport to resolve the dispute but proposes an alternative means to analyze the situation through the lens of multiglossia, where speakers are exposed to and use numerous linguistic varieties of the same language. Rather than ascribing differing linguistic elements to completely disparate stages of development, it is worthwhile to allow for the possibility that the text – regardless of the specific date of composition – was written by authors who were

³⁵⁹ Harold Henry Rowley, *The Aramaic of the Old Testament: a grammatical and lexical study of its relations with other early Aramaic dialects*. (Oxford university press, 1929),

³⁶⁰ Walter Baumgartner, “Das Aramäische im Buche Daniel, ” *ZAW* (1927): 118

³⁶¹ Arthur Ernest Cowley, *Aramaic papyri of the fifth century BC* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), XV

influenced by numerous linguistic varieties of Aramaic. Therefore, although the language of the text is ostensibly Imperial Aramaic, scholars have quickly discovered inconsistencies (such as the aforementioned dropping of the *nūn* and the second- and third-person plural possessive suffixes) that prove otherwise. These linguistic aberrancies should not be viewed as the consequence of earlier or later dates (although we are not excluding this possibility) but rather the product of a hybrid linguistic register that has emerged due to the multiglossia of its authors.

Avi Hurvitz in his classic article, “The Chronological Significance of Aramaisms in Biblical Hebrew,” first cautioned against the linguistic overgeneralization of Aramaic. He emphatically refers to “Aramaisms” as borrowings and loanwords from the standardized Imperial register, yet he allows for the possibility of influence from eastern and western oral vernaculars as well.³⁶² As such, while it is initially tempting to classify Biblical Aramaic as a monolithic entity, one must be aware that the Aramaic of the Bible likely represented an amalgamation of numerous linguistic varieties (including both the formal standard and colloquial vernaculars). While it is ostensibly written in the Imperial Aramaic of the Achaemenid Empire, it pervades with influences from dialectal sources – in particular, drawing from the divergent eastern varieties, which differed significantly from the established standard used throughout the empire. Na’ama Pat-el writes about the existence of so-called “diagnostic features” – lexical items and patterns which betray the eastern nature of the text. For instance, the use of the word *דילמא* (*dilmā*) in the Book of Ezra to mean “lest” or “so that”, for instance, provides support for the theory of the book having an eastern origin.³⁶³ Pat-el remarks that translations have been apt

³⁶² Hurvitz, A. “The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 18, no. 4 (1968): 234–240.

³⁶³ Pat-El, “Traces of Aramaic Dialectal Variation in Late Biblical Hebrew,” 650–655.

to overlook the subtle eastern influences within the text, resulting in the misinterpretation of certain words, the meaning of which is elucidated only if one looks to the lexicon of eastern vernaculars. The following table shows the appearance of די-למה (and the shorter equivalent למה) in Aramaic Ezra, the translation into English, as well as the translation that Pat-el has proposed on the basis of Eastern Aramaic.

Table 8: Use of למה in Biblical Aramaic

| BIBLICAL ARAMAIC VERSE | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | PROPOSED TRANSLATION BASED ON EASTERN ARAMAIC ³⁶⁴ |
|--|--|---|
| <p>כָּל-דִּי מִן-טַעַם אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָּא יִתְעַבֵּד אִדְרִיזְדָּא לְבֵית אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָּא: דִּי-לְמָה לְהֹנָא קִצְפָּא עַל-מַלְכוּת מַלְכָּא וּבְנוֹהֵי</p> | <p>Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? – Ezra 7:23</p> | <p>"Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, so that wrath not come upon the realm of the king and his heirs</p> |
| <p>וְזָהִירִין הֲוֹו שְׁלוֹ, לְמַעַבְד עַל-דְּנָה לְמָה יִשְׁגָּא חֲבָלָא, לְהַנְזֻקַת מַלְכִין.</p> | <p>And take heed that you be not slack herein; why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? – Ezra 4:22</p> | <p>Take care not to be slack in this matter, so that damage will not grow to the hurt of the king</p> |

Pat-el cites the above examples to argue the eastern nature of the text, as well as mentioning the research Kutscher, who claimed that while it is impossible to determine the origin of Biblical Aramaic, it seems that it is imperial Aramaic with an eastern flavor. Kutscher writes the following:

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 651-652

"אין אסמכתא לקבוע את מקום מוצאה של הארמית המקראית, שאף היא אינה אלא "ארמית ממלכתית" שכן הארמית בתקופה הנ"ל בתחומים הנ"ל. כאמור אחת היא בשינויים פועטים, אע"פ שיש להניח כי מוצאה המזרחי"³⁶⁵ –

There is no written evidence to determine the place of origin of Biblical Aramaic, which is nothing more than Imperial Aramaic – that is the Aramaic of the aforementioned time period in the aforementioned places. It is the same language, although we must presume that its origin is in the east.

Kutscher argues that the use of ל before names situates Biblical Aramaic in the east, as this style was uncommon for the west.³⁶⁶ In short, Pat-El and Kutscher both concur that Biblical Aramaic cannot be viewed as a pure representation of the imperial standard of the language.

If one accepts the argument of an eastern dialectal substrate within the text, then this would likely constitute an exemplary case of multiglossia. The Aramaic of Ezra does not represent pristine Imperial Aramaic due to the inadvertent use and permeation of eastern oral vernacular. The writers of the book attempted to compose their work in the style and convention of the Imperial standard, yet the influence of the spoken dialect around them was too great and inadvertently seeped into the text, rendering the Aramaic of Ezra a mix of both. It therefore cannot be classified as either or, but rather it lies somewhere in the middle between the two ends of the spectrum. This mixed language used in Ezra fits nicely with the multilevel model devised by El-Said Badawi to describe Arabic, where the eloquent classical and the plebian colloquial occupy two opposite ends of the spectrum. In reality, neither exists in pure form.³⁶⁷ Most Arabic

³⁶⁵ "קוטשר, י. "הארמית המקראית—ארמית מזרחית היא או מערבית"³⁶⁵

Report (World Congress of Jewish Studies)/דין וחשבון-הקונגרס העולמי למדעי היהדות/World Union of Jewish Studies/1947, האיגוד העולמי למדעי היהדות, 24.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 127.

³⁶⁷ Hary, Benjamin. "The Importance of the Language Continuum in Arabic Multiglossia," 71.

tends to fall somewhere along the continuum, with their proximity to either end of the spectrum being determined by the frequency and recurrence of certain markers (or “diagnostic features” in the words of Pat-El). Badawi’s model is particularly useful in the case of Aramaic because it allows for a more accurate and nuanced representation of the linguistic diversity within the language. Aramaic is not simply a dichotomy between written standard and spoken dialect; it is far more complex than that, containing numerous transitional varieties that lie somewhere in the middle between perfect standard and pure colloquial.

In spite of state-imposed conventions for written communication, oral vernaculars in both Arabic and Aramaic continue to exert influence on speakers and writers, resulting in the inevitable emergence of intermediary varieties. By this contention, Biblical Aramaic (in both Ezra and Daniel) is far too rich and varied to constitute a single register. It is certainly not written completely in Imperial Aramaic, given the posited presence of traces of Eastern influence. The language used in Ezra lies somewhere in the middle within the continuum, characteristic of a multiglossic situation. In Arabic studies, the term “educated standard Arabic” has been proposed to describe the speech forms and linguistic propensities of individuals who have received formal schooling.³⁶⁸ Consequently, their speech abounds with a higher frequency of sophisticated and literary vocabulary as well as the use of some of the morphological and phonological conventions of the standard. Nonetheless, their contrived manner of speaking is an imperfect replication of the standard, sporadically featuring lexemes or phonemes of their local speech variety. Perhaps such a concept should be extrapolated to the study of Aramaic, where educated writers attempted to imitate the style of Imperial Aramaic but are inevitably betrayed by the use

³⁶⁸ Albirini, Abdulkafi. *Modern Arabic Sociolinguistics: Diglossia, Codeswitching, Attitudes, and Identity*. (Abdington: Routledge, 2016), 24.

of eastern colloquialisms. An “educated Imperial Aramaic” might be a more accurate appellation to describe the nuances of the hybrid language preserved in the text.

It is not surprising that there is no written record in “pure” dialect Aramaic, and that all written texts preserve a “mixed” register that is perhaps closer to formal than informal, as education skews the nature of writing in the direction of formality. Andreas Lötscher writes:

“Wer Mundart schreibt, vollzieht typisch standardsprachliche Tätigkeiten in einer anderen Sprachform nach; umgekehrt: Ohne Standardsprache schreiben gelernt zu haben, wird man auch nie Mundart schreiben können oder nur wollen. Geschriebene Mundart muß so irgendwo in einer Zwischenzone zwischen lower-level- und higher-level angesiedelt werden.”³⁶⁹

Whoever writes in dialect understands typical Standard-language activities in another linguistic form and vice versa: Without having learned the standard language, one can never write in dialect or one would only have the desire and not the capacity to do so. Written dialect must therefore be placed somewhere in the middle between lower-level and higher-level language.

Writing – even if one attempts to write the way one speaks – will inevitably contain elements of formality because of the education required in order to attain literacy and written proficiency. Any form of “written” dialect would not lie nearer to the formal end of the spectrum. In terms of writing and the composing of texts, the standard has an overpowering influence over dialect, invariably rendering the subsequent result from a writer a mix of the two. It is precisely for this reason that it is difficult to reconstruct dialectology simply on the basis on textual evidence: no written corpus preserves oral vernacular with perfect accuracy nor does it provide adequate documentation of the natural variation that exists in spoken languages.

³⁶⁹ Andreas Lötscher, “Probleme Und Problemlösungen Bei Der Mundartschreibung Des Schweizerdeutschen.” *Zeitschrift Für Dialektologie Und Linguistik* 56, no. 3 (1989): 276

In sum, based on the evidence of linguistic inconsistencies found in the book of Ezra, we proposed that at least three distinct levels of Aramaic are likely to have existed. The first – Imperial Aramaic – was the codified register promoted by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Achaemenids, and it was adopted throughout their empires to linguistically unite the population, at least as far as written communication is concerned. Nonetheless, we are aware of the abundance and proliferation of oral vernaculars, with the eastern varieties being particularly divergent and distinct. These constitute the second level of the Aramaic language. The continued existence of these dialects was undeterred by the state-sponsored promotion of a written standard, as subsequent varieties later emerged as independent languages, proving the resilience of the eastern dialects in the face of attempted linguistic homogenization. With the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire, the support structure necessary to maintain linguistic cohesion disappeared, and former “dialects” secured their own autonomy, as shown by the synchronic development of new scripts and written languages, emerging from the formerly marginalized eastern varieties. However, it is important to point out that written Aramaic and colloquial speech forms did not constitute a dichotomy, as such a model would be an oversimplification of the linguistic situation. Instead, the text of Ezra betrays the existence of intermediary varieties that sprung up, as speakers attempted to produce formal writing but were inadvertently influenced by their local varieties. This created the existence of a third level of Aramaic, one which renders the contention of a binary taxonomy untenable. This third level occupies the transitional space between the two imagined ends of the spectrum. This is the most fluid level, which varies greatly depending on the individual, speech community, and provenance of the dialect. Furthermore, because there are virtually no remnants of colloquial ancient Aramaic other than occasional linguistic peculiarities, it is impossible to know the full extent of the

disparity between the spoken and written registers of the language. However, based on the diversity of later independent written languages (Syriac, Mandaic, Palmyrene, etc.), we know that the oral vernaculars were in continual evolution, even whilst speakers used a common written language.

Multiglossia in the Post-Exile Period

Multiglossia persisted within the Judean speech community beyond the Persian Period. In fact, the problematic language of the literary corpus composed after Ezra and Daniel corroborates the multidialectal view advanced hitherto. For example, Targum Onkelos has long constituted a source of debate among scholars, who express perplexity regarding its linguistic value and the nature of its composition.³⁷⁰ As with the case of the biblical books of Daniel and Ezra, the language of the Targum resists easy classification due to the presence of linguistically divergent features that do not wholly conform to any one particular register or stratum of Aramaic. Theodor Nöldeke was one of the first scholars who pioneered a novel approach that allowed for more taxonomic flexibility. Rather than attempting a monolithic classification of the language of the Targum, Nöldeke accepts the contention regarding the Palestinian origin of the text, yet he also identifies a secondary substrate of Babylonian Aramaic influence. Regarding this theory, he writes the following: “Man bewahrte allerdings leidlich den älteren palastinischen Dialekt, aber der in manchen Stücken abweichende babylonische wirkte dochents teilend ein.”³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ c.f. Abraham Geiger in *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel*, 1857, where he argues that the Targum constitutes a Babylonian composition. However, Gottstein-Goshen (1978) believes that Geiger promoted this simple and monolithic view as a result of his interest in Judaism and rabbinic tradition, and that this view emerged as a result of extra-lingual considerations.

³⁷¹ T. Nöldeke, *Die semitischen Sprachen: eine Skizze* (Chr. Herm. Tauchnitz, 1899), 32

(“The old Palestinian dialect was preserved, but in some parts, the influence of the Babylonian dialect can be sporadically seen.”) By postulating an inter-dialectal composition of the text, Nöldeke became one of the first scholars who recognized the likelihood of polyglossia as the reason for the ostensible inexplicable linguistic aberrancies, although the precise terminology to delineate the phenomenon did not yet exist during his time. Essentially, the redactors of Targum Onkelos must have been familiar with sundry dialects, and their writing was therefore irrevocably influenced by the multiplicity of dialects to which they had been exposed.

There are at least two identifiable literary idioms within the Targum, rendering the text a sort of linguistic chimera, as it seamlessly blends two disparate linguistic varieties into one single document. Gottstein-Goshen believes that it is possible that the text was composed in Babylonia and that its authors were competent in numerous dialects and registers of both Hebrew and Aramaic. It is this demonstrable versatility and linguistic dexterity that enabled the writers to oscillate between at least two types of Aramaic. Gottstein-Goshen considers his work to be an expansion and more satisfactory explanation of the “Vulgärdialekt” contention which had existed in the past. He terms his proposal of the multidialectalism of Targumic writers as the “Babylonian theory,” where “Jews in Babylonia switched freely from one literary Aramaic language to another, according to subject matter or occasion.”³⁷² The authors of the text had access to a wide array of literary and oral registers in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Goshen-Gottstein suggests the term “pentaglossia” as a means to describe the complex linguistic and dialectal interchange present in the text, with five registers in two languages which may have

³⁷² M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Language of Targum Onkelos and the Model of Literary Diglossia in Aramaic.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 37, no. 2 (1978): 169–179

been interwoven into the corpus of Judean writers in Babylonia.³⁷³ Pentaglossia as a term seems hyperbolic, and it is dubious if one can fully identify five distinct strands of language within the writings of the Babylonian Jewry. However, while this scholarly description might be an overly ambitious attempt to include all possible substrates of linguistic influence, Gottstein-Goshen's work represents a serious endeavor to problematize the Aramaic language and to acknowledge the highly nuanced and convoluted nature of its textual tradition.

The Status of Aramaic after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire: Persistence of Diglossia

During its hegemony over the Near East, the Achaemenid Empire employed Aramaic as a universal written language in order to unify a diverse populace, comprising of numerous ethnic groups and speech communities. However, the collapse of their political regime in 330 B.C.E. had inevitable consequences for the use and development of Aramaic. Centuries later, we witness the advent of new writing systems and the emergence of autonomous quasi-Aramaic languages. However, it is paramount to emphasize that the transition between the Imperial standard and independent regional varieties was a protracted process. Holger Gzella has conducted extensive research on the diachronic development of the Aramaic language and writes on the role of the language in light of its historical backdrop in his article, "Aramaic in the Parthian Period" as well as his monograph, *A Cultural History of Aramaic*. He is of the opinion that the standard Aramaic of the Achaemenids continued to be commonly used centuries after the empire's collapse before eventually being replaced by local independent languages, summarizing the post-Achaemenid linguistic situation as follows:

³⁷³ Ibid., 175

The evidence, then, points to a period of transition: emerging local varieties, such as the Aramaic dialects of Palmyra, Edessa, and Hatra, only gradually took shape and were promoted to written languages. Presumably, this happened at some point during the 2nd or 1st centuries B.C., while the last fringes of the Achaemenid official idiom were still used for representative purposes in regions like Elymais during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. Comparable linguistic situations characterized by competing varieties of Aramaic also occurred in other parts of the former Achaemenid Empire.³⁷⁴

Imperial Aramaic continued to exert influence and to retain its preeminence as the language of formality and writing, long after the demise of the political system which had conferred it recognition and support. Although local languages did spring up and eventually replace Imperial Achaemenid Aramaic as the primary official idiom, this was a very gradual process. During post-Achaemenid times, a myriad of distinct oral vernaculars continued to be spoken in many regions across the former territories of the Achaemenids; nevertheless, they did not immediately ascend to prominence, nor did they supplant Imperial Aramaic. In some cases, there was some competition between the standard register and local vernaculars, but the former proved to be extremely resilient. Inscriptions show that the Imperial Aramaic “was considered prestigious enough to be employed as a veneer in official representation even after the fall of the Achaemenid empire.”³⁷⁵ As such, it was not so easily toppled.

The sustained use of Imperial Aramaic as the official idiom implies a continuation of the linguistic status quo, with diglossia continuing to be the characteristic phenomenon of most Aramaic speech communities. Because Imperial Aramaic was still considered the prestige register, speakers would write one way and speak another. Although the previous state-endorsed

³⁷⁴ Holger Gzella “Aramaic in the Parthian Period: The Arsacid Inscriptions” in *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting*, ed. Holger Gzella and Margaretha L. Folmer (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2008), 106.

³⁷⁵ Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*, 201.

language policies were no longer in place, Imperial Aramaic enjoyed sustained prominence. As a result, the effects of a collapsed Empire were not as adverse for the continuity of the language as one might imagine. Contrary to our expectations, a tectonic shift in the political arena did not result in a concomitant disruption of equivalent magnitude in the linguistic landscape of the Near East. Standard Imperial Aramaic did not vanish immediately, and speakers presumably continued to practice diglossia (or multiglossia), just as they had before. For example, linguistic evidence from Jewish incantation bowls had led some scholars to conclude that diglossia persisted in Jewish Aramaic, centuries after the fall of the Empire.³⁷⁶ However, Aramaic's resilience and continued survival is not as surprising when one examines modern linguistic landscapes and the retention of prestige languages even after the waning of the original national power responsible for conferring prominence to these linguistic varieties.

Modern Africa is a quintessential example of how imperial languages continue to predominate and wield power in spite of the disintegration of the empires that backed them. After the departure and removal of colonial powers, the emerging nation states in Africa found themselves linguistically affiliated with their former rulers, in spite of achieving independence from them. In numerous African states, the languages of the colonizers continue to enjoy official status, with French in twenty-two countries and English following as the official tongue in nineteen.³⁷⁷ These languages continue to command prestige and have not been displaced, in spite of the absence of the colonial powers that enforced their usage. The European colonization of

³⁷⁶ Tapani Harviainen . "Diglossia in Jewish Eastern Aramaic." *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 55 (1984): 95-114.

³⁷⁷ Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi "The Language Situation in Africa Today." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 2, no.1, (1993): 79-86.

Africa has left an indelible effect on its language policies and the linguistic preferences of its population, decades after their withdrawal from the continent. Not only did the creation of arbitrary borders during the colonial period continue to divide Africans, but the concomitant language dynamics of the time remain in place, with shockingly little alteration to the linguistic situation. It is also significant to mention that the identities forged as a result of the imposition of colonial borders and language policies have not shifted significantly, and little effort has been made in reshaping the identities of post-colonial nation states.³⁷⁸ The breakdown and crumbling of the British and French Empires in continental Africa did not result in the displacement of the languages they had brought with them; English and French retain tremendous utility in the realms of education and administration, even exceeding that of local languages.

The complex linguistic situation in post-colonial Africa constitutes an imperfect parallel to the language dynamics of the post-Achaemenid Near East, as the time frame is much shorter. Nonetheless, the African narrative demonstrates that the unravelling of an imperial regime does not necessarily signify the erosion of the linguistic legacy it has left behind. Just as Africans are still very much affected by English, French, and other major European languages after the departure of the Europeans, the peoples of the Near East were likewise similarly susceptible to the power of Aramaic after the disappearance of the Achaemenids from the political arena. For several decades, the status of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* was not shaken by the change in the political scene. Beyer writes the following regarding the use of Aramaic after the collapse of the empire.

³⁷⁸ Simpson, Andrew, *Language and National Identity in Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

Nor did the end of the Persian imperial administration in 331 B.C. alter things immediately. Only about a century later did the script, orthography and language of the individual areas begin to develop more and more differences, under the influence of the spoken dialects.³⁷⁹

As mentioned previously, spoken dialects had always co-existed together with the written register of Aramaic, yet these could not immediately usurp Imperial Aramaic in the post-Achaemenid era. Only with the passage of time did the dialects eventually gain enough traction to pose a threat to the traditional written language, and even with the advent of “written dialects” was the influence of Achaemenid Imperial Aramaic still palpable. Just as African identities are still shaped to this day by the language of their former colonizers, Aramaic persisted as an integral part of the identity of the Judean speech community. By the time of the Alexander the Great and the defeat of the Persian Empire, “Aramaic was firmly fixed in the Jewish sociolinguistic profile.”³⁸⁰ The inextricable connection between language and identity is important to emphasize. The adoption of Aramaic across the empire and by the Judean community in particular resulted in an inevitable alteration to their identity, one which could be not be easily repudiated. Other linguistic forces were not adequate to topple Aramaic from the prestigious pedestal it had long occupied. Spoken dialects were still relegated to largely speech, and even the introduction of a rival language – Greek – did not displace Aramaic. While some Judeans did speak Greek, the use of Aramaic persisted, especially in Babylonia.³⁸¹ The continual use of Imperial Aramaic in writing proves that a language can continue to subsist even when

³⁷⁹ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 8.

³⁸⁰ Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*, 46.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p.47, also c.f. Pieter Van der Horst, “Greek,” *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010).

later deprived of the state-backed endorsement it originally received. Language replacement of a universally-adopted tongue occurs very slowly if at all. In fact, it was not until the Islamic conquests of the seventh century A.D. that Aramaic was finally superseded as a widespread language of the Near East.³⁸²

Therefore, while state-sponsored nationalism is an important factor for the promotion of a particular language, Aramaic's status in the post-Achaemenid world shows that a language can enjoy predominance and sustained use even without continued national support, provided that it had already achieved sufficient traction by the time of the disappearance of a state. An influential language like Aramaic outlives the nation state responsible for its promotion. The consolidated status of Aramaic as a Near Eastern lingua franca could not be so easily undermined, even in the midst of political upheaval and new conquests. While diglossia (and possibly multiglossia) became the new norm for most Aramaic speakers during the time of the Achaemenids, it is important to note that the Aramaic standard codified and promoted during their sovereignty continued to be used even after the demise of the Empire. The resilience of Aramaic in the aftermath of radical political changes testifies to the indelible effect Achaemenid rule left on the linguistic landscape of the Near East. Diglossia was continually practiced, even though the standard language lost the official recognition it enjoyed under the Achaemenids.

³⁸² Yona Sabar, "Aramaic, Once an International Language, Now on the Verge of Expiration: Are the Days of its Last Vestiges Numbered?" in *When Languages Collide: Perspectives on Language Conflict, Language Competition, and Language Coexistence*, ed. Brian D. Joseph. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), 222.

Using Aramaic as a means of asserting identity in Post-Achaemenid Times: An example of Language Consciousness

In fact, not only did the impact of Aramaic not wane in spite of a tumultuous political landscape, but the language had also become so ingrained as an integral part of the identity of its speakers that many individuals fiercely clung to it in light of the vicissitudes of the time. Several centuries before, the Assyrian Empire had imposed the language as a means to achieve political unity, and Aramaic functioned as a cornerstone for the new identity of the imperial subjects. The Assyrians were later superseded by the Babylonians, who were followed by the Achaemenids; however, the efforts they had made to impose an artificial identity and enforce linguistic assimilation were perpetuated by their successors. The Achaemenid Empire not only tolerated the existence of Aramaization, but they also contributed appreciably to ensure their continuity. Parpola writes: “The Achaemenids, who themselves were significantly Assyrianized, felt no need to change existing realities. Imperial Aramaic continued as the *lingua franca*...The 210 years of Achaemenid rule thus helped preserve the Assyrian identity of the Aramaic-speaking peoples.”³⁸³ As such, by the time of the Greeks in the fourth century B.C.E and the overthrowing of the Persian Empire, the inhabitants of the Near East had long grown accustomed to the centrality of Aramaic in everyday life and had personalized the language, customizing it to the needs of their communities. Diglossia was a regular feature of their language profile, with speech communities alternating between Imperial Aramaic and their own local dialect. This affinity to the Aramaic language, which had gradually developed and crystallized under centuries of imperial rule, could not be so easily undermined, even with the entrance of new political powers.

³⁸³ Parpola, “National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times,” 19.

The linguistic landscape of the Near East became increasingly complex and intricate with the arrival of the Greeks, as language replacement did not occur. Much of the region's population steadfastly held onto their languages – both the written and spoken forms – and did not abandon them in favor of adopting the tongue of new rulers, whom they perceived as foreign invaders. It is crucial to note that the formal register of Aramaic – whether or not it was spoken – enjoyed sustained utility during this time. In fact, during the post-Achaemenid period, Aramaic was transformed from a symbol of elitist status to a cultural anchor for the local denizens of the Near East, who were now confronted with forced cultural assimilation at the hands of their new rulers. Hellenism became a new reality, and evidence for its increasing visibility has been discovered in the form of monumental remains, coin mintage, and papyri.³⁸⁴ In order to push back against the abundance of Greek influence, language served as a central means for the Judean speech community (among others) to retain their identity and to assert their cultural distinctness. Beyer writes: “The retention of Imperial Aramaic in northwest Arabia, Judea, Palmyra, Babylonia, and Parthia serves to underline national independence against the Seleucids and Romans and cultural autonomy against Hellenism.”³⁸⁵ We may presume that during this time, Imperial Aramaic was not the native language of the people, who spoke divergent Aramaic vernaculars. Imperial Aramaic was the universal written standard inherited from the Achaemenids, yet it proved to be a useful tool in resisting the linguistic encroachment of another people. Speakers exhibited high levels of language consciousness, deliberating preserving an older stratum of their language in order to assert their identity. Diglossia was not just a natural

³⁸⁴ Robert Harrison, “Hellenization in Syria-Palestine: The Case of Judea in the Third Century BCE.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 57, no. 2 (1994): 98–108.

³⁸⁵ Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, 19.

condition of the linguistic landscape; it was a critical element in the retention of identity when threatened by foreign powers.

Although Aramaic was originally not native to many of these provinces, centuries of effective language planning resulted in its unquestionable success, to the point where the language became a characteristic component of the local population's identity. The use of Imperial Aramaic served as a key element to counteract the effects of Hellenism and to combat the belligerence of the ensuing culture war. Although the conventions of written Aramaic were not reflective of the divergent oral dialects, written Aramaic continued to command prestige, and, therefore, diglossia (and, quite likely, multiglossia) persisted as a common phenomenon. Beyer writes: "That an older language or linguistic stratum should serve as the written language is a regular feature among the Semites."³⁸⁶ The diglossic linguistic profile of individuals became a critical part of their identity, as individuals sought to push back against the influence of Greek.

Aramaic Diglossia as a Sign of Metalinguistic Awareness during Hellenic Rule

The retention of the written standard language codified during the days of the Achaemenids testifies to the indelible mark left by the imperial regime as well as the resilience of the Aramaic language throughout its history. Centuries of language planning, deliberate governmental promotion, and policies of re-education had the irrevocable effect of making the language an indispensable part of the population's identity, culture, and collective awareness. Writing is a powerful marker of identity, and by actively refusing to embrace the language of the Greeks and continually employing a set of otherwise obsolete writing conventions, the Judean

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 19.

speech community was consciously asserting their linguistic and cultural autonomy, as well as protecting their identity from being undermined by the waves of mass cultural assimilation. In order to understand the import of the written language for the preservation and maintenance of one's identity, one must first clarify that writing is not simply the transcription of spoken language. Writing has important implications for our understanding of ancient societies and cultures. According to Donald Rubin, "it a distinctly social- and cultural-psychological act."³⁸⁷ Furthermore, there is an unmistakable disparity between the quality of spoken language in contrast to written language. Spoken language tends to be more spontaneous and fluid, while written language is naturally more rigid and contrived. While both are communicative forms of engagement with an audience, the latter is much more deliberate and entails a more explicit sense of language consciousness. Wolfgang Wildgen writes: "The deeper source for the evolution of writing was therefore the transition between spoken language as an unconscious routine...to meta-linguistic awareness, linguistic consciousness."³⁸⁸ This key difference between the two forms of language is quite understandable: writing requires a much higher level of awareness than free-flowing speech. Moreover, it demands thought, skill, and preparation. The process of composing a text reveals a certain degree of deliberateness and intention, with redactors often embedding subtle messages with the words they have chosen.

The purpose of writing is not simply to preserve the language of orality; writing has its own unique function and set of principles that do not apply to spoken language. The consciousness underlying written language is a central element that distinguishes it from speech

³⁸⁷ Donald L. Rubin, *Composing Social Identity in Written Language*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 49

³⁸⁸ Wolfgang Wildgen, *The Evolution of Human Language: Scenarios, Principles, and Cultural Dynamics*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 87

and also makes it an instructive tool for reconstructing and analyzing the cultural dynamic of ancient speech communities. Writing encapsulates cultural responses to various phenomena of the time as well as reveals the collective psyche of the people represented in the text. The rise of the Greek Empire and their subsequent attempts of systematic cultural homogenization resulted in people in various regions of the Ancient Near East steadfastly holding onto the Aramaic language. Writing did not serve merely a practical function; it evolved into a form of active resistance. By consciously using written Aramaic, speakers conferred the language a new purpose and meaning in times of uncertainty. According to Louis Feldman, for the Judean community in particular, using Aramaic (in conjunction with Hebrew) during the Hellenic Period “served as a constant barrier to assimilation.”³⁸⁹ Speakers knowingly used a language which had lost its official status in order to demonstrate their opposition to the new cultural and linguistic impositions taking place. Holding steadfastly to Aramaic in the face of Hellenization was an act of language consciousness and represents a collective attempt on the part of the Judean speech community (as well as others) to retain their identity.

Diglossia had become such an integral part of their linguistic profile, and it continued unimpeded even in the face of new existential threats. The written form of Aramaic did not even reflect the patterns of their speech, as it has been argued that the written conventions of Imperial Aramaic differed significantly from the norms of the natural spoken language. It would be expected that the divergence would have been accentuated even further, centuries after the collapse of the Empire. Using an obsolete register of a politically marginalized language was a means for Aramaic-speaking individuals to preserve their sense of identity. This shows the

³⁸⁹ Louis H. Feldman, “How Much Hellenism in Jewish Palestine?” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 57, (1986): 93.

power of language consciousness. Speakers were aware of the implications of using Aramaic in a Hellenistic world, yet they continued to do so as a way to assert their identity. For them, Aramaic represented cultural distinctness, ethnic pride, and even hope for political autonomy, and in this way, Aramaic experienced an unexpected surge in popularity and use among certain speech communities and continued to survive as both a distinct written and spoken language during the Hellenic Period.

Implications of Diglossia in Aramaic for Understanding Language Consciousness

This chapter has examined the history of Aramaic as an official idiom of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Achaemenid Empires in order to delineate the process of its promotion and codification. One of the most direct and important consequences of this century-long development is the ensuing diglossia that became characteristic of Aramaic speech communities across the Near East. With the imposition of the imperial standard on the populace, speakers inevitably became multi-dialectal, retaining their own colloquial vernaculars while adopting universally prescribed linguistic conventions for the purposes of writing. Here we must reiterate what was emphasized in previous chapters: diglossia is a sociolinguistic condition that results in the elevation of language consciousness among speakers, who must adjust their style of expression according to the needs of different situations. In addition, in the case of Aramaic, we have suggested that the linguistic landscape was even more nuanced than the label “diglossia” would indicate; hence, the term “multiglossia” has been extrapolated from Arabic studies as a way to describe complex linguistic systems, where the formal and informal registers of language overlap to create numerous intermediary varieties that contain elements from both. Speakers of Aramaic – especially those in Jerusalem – quite likely were influenced by multiple linguistic

varieties, resulting in a heterogeneous blending of different vernaculars and ranges of formality. Of course, reconstructing ancient Aramaic dialectology is an endeavor fraught with difficulty and it is impossible to know how much each dialect influenced a particular text (or even where the demarcating lines between dialects are). Nonetheless, presenting evidence for diglossia and multiglossia serves to problematize Aramaic and to illustrate the linguistic challenges Aramaic speakers had to confront. Navigating so many dialects would have the effect of rendering speakers more attuned to the fine distinctions that distinguish linguistic variety from another.

Finally, the last section of the chapter dealt with the retention of Aramaic even after the collapse of the empire and political institutions responsible for its ascent. Diglossia persisted as the characteristic phenomenon of Aramaic speech communities, and Imperial Aramaic continued to command relative prestige, despite massive changes in the political arena. In fact, not only did Aramaic speakers continue to practice diglossia as they always had, but they clung steadfastly to both their dialect and Imperial Aramaic as a means to assert their linguistic and cultural autonomy in the face of coerced assimilation by the Greeks. Writing in Aramaic and upholding archaic linguistic conventions served as means to assert one's identity. In essence, the practice of diglossia became a collective act of language consciousness, as speakers were aware of the import of their actions. Consciously clinging to Imperial Aramaic was a way to anchor themselves in the past and to nullify the effects of Hellenization. In the case of Aramaic, diglossia contributed to activating language consciousness in two ways: firstly, by increasing speaker awareness of the distinguishing features separating different linguistic varieties, and secondly, by facilitating the retention of linguistic autonomy and identity during the rise of Hellenism.

CHAPTER 6: DIALECT CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Introduction to Dialect Consciousness

Previous chapters dealt with the issue of diglossia and how this linguistic condition intensifies speaker awareness. Another linguistic condition that amplifies language consciousness is exposure to a multiplicity of dialects. When speakers come into contact with mutually intelligible but distinct forms of the same language, they develop a more sophisticated understanding of natural variations that distinguish vernaculars from one another. We propose the introduction of a new label to describe the heightened awareness of speakers regarding the range of variability within a single language: *dialect consciousness*. This constitutes a subdivision within language consciousness, yet it is arguably more specific and nuanced as a linguistic phenomenon. One of the earliest appearances of this term is in the English translation of research on Japanese dialectology, with Japanese scholar Misao Tojo describing the generalized awareness of differences in vernacular: “The feeling that a dialect is different is something everyone can relate to. Even if there is not a clear perception based on specific criteria, one must still have a vague feeling.”³⁹⁰ Dialect consciousness is inherently subjective, wholly dependent on the observations and perceptions of the individual. While it might be difficult to substantiate on these “vague feelings,” this collective consciousness is a powerful sociolinguistic force. Loose and arbitrary perceptions of linguistic differences have a palpable effect on the interactions and behaviors of speakers toward one another and drives the development and achievement of sundry political and social outcomes.

³⁹⁰ Takesi Sibata, “Consciousness of Dialect Boundaries,” in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, ed. Dennis R. Preston. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 39.

Furthermore, in modern dialectology, speakers' intuitive understanding of linguistic differences often aligns nicely with systematized research on dialect taxonomy and classification. In fact, there is a "deep relationship between dialect divisions and the dialect consciousness of the masses."³⁹¹ Therefore, for modern dialectological studies, native speakers are an invaluable asset for dialectological studies. Although they may not be able to articulate the specifics, their ability to observe and draw conclusions is astoundingly accurate. The reliance on the opinions and assessments of interlocutors regarding the boundaries of spoken vernaculars is known as "perceptual dialectology" or "folk dialectology."³⁹² Even so, the level of dialect consciousness is variable from individual to individual and is amenable to the influence of external factors, such as the extent of exposure to other linguistic varieties. Frequent or prolonged contact with other speech communities will have the inevitable effect of increasing the sensitivity of speakers to minute phonological and lexical differences.

At this point, we turn our attention to ancient languages. While modern dialectology studies are heavily reliant on perceptions of native speakers regarding differences in vernaculars, we have no speakers of ancient Hebrew or Aramaic. Nonetheless, we can still posit that dialect consciousness would have existed back then, just as it is found in modern speech communities today based on the *uniformitarian principle*. Suzanne Romaine outlines this principle, writing the following: "The working principle of sociolinguistic reconstruction must be the uniformitarian principle. In other words, we accept that the linguistic forces which operate today and are

³⁹¹ Daniel Long, "Geographical Perceptions of Japanese Dialect Regions," in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, ed. Dennis R. Preston. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 177

³⁹² Erica J. Benson, "Folk linguistic perceptions and the mapping of dialect boundaries." *American speech* 78, no.3 (2003): 303

observable around us are not unlike those which have operated in the past.”³⁹³ Operating under the uniformitarian principles, we can assert the following: just as speakers of modern languages are sensitive to the distinctions in oral vernaculars, the ancient Hebrews/Judeans would have also exhibited a similar degrees of dialect consciousness. Hebrew speakers in the past could be subdivided into smaller communities based on varying levels of differentiation between the colloquial varieties, and we argue that individuals were acutely aware of these internal divisions. Dialect consciousness had profound effects on the relationships between members of different speech communities (as in the case of Judges 12) and also had significant influence on the composition of certain texts within the Hebrew Bible. This chapter will seek to elucidate the extent of the visible social and political impact from a linguistic anthropological perspective, before proceeding to examine the textual aspects of dialect consciousness, contending that authors intentionally incorporated elements of dialect in their writings in order to demonstrate the existence of strong regional identities within ancient Israel. Because we have no living speakers, we must work with texts. Our proposed data set for better understanding dialect consciousness as a general phenomenon of Biblical times will be Judges 12, the Elisha-Elijah narratives in 1-2 Kings, and Genesis 31. After examining evidence of dialect consciousness in these texts, we will redirect our attention to the Judean community in Jerusalem and see how the same dialect consciousness persisted as a phenomenon during the Persian Period.

³⁹³ Suzanne Romaine. *Language in Society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122. Romaine argues that the uniformitarian principle is a fundamental concept in sociolinguistics today.

Difficulties in the Reconstruction of Ancient Hebrew Dialectology

Before embarking on a discussion on the political, social, and textual impact of dialect consciousness, we shall attempt to delineate the dialectal situation of ancient Hebrew. In order to posit the presence of dialect consciousness as a linguistic phenomenon in Ancient Israel/Judah, we must first prove the existence of dialects within Hebrew. However, working with ancient dialectology naturally comes with its unique set of limitations. In contrast to those working with modern languages, our ability to reconstruct the dialectal inventory of Biblical Hebrew is limited. First of all, we have no living native speakers of the language, making us fully reliant on the text. To complicate the issue, most of the Biblical text was written in a very standard, uniform register of Hebrew, homogenizing dialectal nuances and idiosyncrasies. Therefore, one cannot accurately reconstruct the wealth of dialects. We can only posit its existence by means of the uniformitarian principle, contending that Biblical Hebrew would have been similar to any modern language today and thus would have exhibited internal diversity. This renders us more reliant on perceptual dialectology, which focuses on defining “the ordinary speaker’s taxonomy of language variation categories.”³⁹⁴ We have only have one undisputed instance of perceptual dialectology in Judges 12:6, where the Gileadites had developed an intuitive sense of how the Ephraimite varieties diverged from other oral vernaculars of Hebrew. This is the quintessential case study of dialect consciousness and allows us to speculate regarding the level of linguistic awareness of interlocutors.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֲמָר-נָא שְׂבִלֶת וַיֹּאמֶר סִבְלֶת וְלֹא יָכִין לְדַבֵּר כִּן וַיֹּאחֲזוּ אוֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁחָטוּהוּ אֶל-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן; וַיִּפֹּל בְּעֵת
הַהִיא, מֵאֶפְרַיִם אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁנַיִם אָלֶף – שׁוֹפְטִים 12:6

³⁹⁴ Dennis R. Preston, *Perceptual Dialectology: Nonlinguists’ Views of Areal Linguistics*, (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1989), 2.

Then said they unto him: 'Say now Shibboleth'; and he said 'Sibboleth'; for he could not pronounce it right; then they laid hold on him, and killed him at the fords of the Jordan; and there fell at that time of Ephraim forty two thousand. – Judges 12:6

The Shibboleth incident documented in Judges 12 is significant due to its sociolinguistic implications and is evidence of the fluid and volatile nature of language attitudes and concomitant ideologies. As mentioned previously, perceptions of linguistic differences are constantly in flux and vary depending on the current state of political and social affairs. Dialectal variations that were once overlooked can suddenly become stigmatized and viewed reprehensibly due to tectonic shifts in the political arena. Groups of speakers may suddenly find themselves isolated and even victimized due to peculiarities in their speech now deemed inadmissible. An extended discussion of the linguistic anthropological significance of Judges 12 will appear later in the chapter. In addition, Judges 12 is also important because it constitutes the sole attestation to phonological differences within the Biblical text.³⁹⁵ Given the limitations of the phonemic data available to scholars, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the full phonetic inventory of Ancient Hebrew with relative certainty, much less account for the variability of pronunciation that would likely have existed across the Hebrew-speaking terrain of the time.

Reconstruction of Phonological Differences in Dialects

Although we posit the existence of numerous Hebrew dialects, the complete spectrum of phonological permutations can never fully be elucidated. W. Randall Garr explains the challenge

³⁹⁵ Werner Weinberg, "Language Consciousness in the OT," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92, no.2 (1980), 185. Regarding the Shibboleth incident, Weinberg writes the following: "This one piece of phonetic information contained in the text illustrates how little we really know about the Biblical pronunciation of Hebrew."

facing scholars attempting to reimagine the dialectal landscape of the Ancient Near East while making observations solely based on textual and inscriptional evidence.

“Phonetic differences in speech, exact phonetic realizations of phonemes, and regional language variation must be filtered through the camouflage of written language. Although the written and spoken languages were not necessarily different, the conventional practices of orthography did tend to obscure individual linguistic differences among speakers.”³⁹⁶

Because scholars of ancient Semitic languages are wholly reliant on written records, they must navigate the manifold constrictions of the textual corpus in order to gain some understanding of Hebrew’s internal linguistic diversity. The reliance on the written record for reconstruction of ancient phonology is challenging for numerous reasons. Firstly, writing is generally not an accurate representation of the full phonemic inventory of a given language. The sounds articulated in speech are not always fully represented in a written transcript. Florian Coulmas writes: “Recording information by graphical means is a basic function of writing that is never narrowed down entirely to the representation of sounds. Writing cannot and should not be reduced to speech.”³⁹⁷ This is because the number of graphemes (units in the written word to indicate pronunciation) does not have one-to-one correspondence with the number of phonemes (a unit of articulated sound). Standard English, for example, has been determined to have seventeen distinct vowel sounds³⁹⁸ (this number varies, however, depending on the dialect),

³⁹⁶ Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine: 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 10.

³⁹⁷ Florian Coulmas, *Writing Systems: An Introduction to Their Linguistic Analysis.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

³⁹⁸ James A. Reggia Rita Sloan and Charlotte C. Mitchum. "Empirically derived probabilities for grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences in English." *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers* 19, no. 1 (1987): 1-9.

although the number of actual written vowels is only five – significantly fewer and therefore insufficient to represent the great diversity of vocalic sounds within the language. Semitic languages experienced a similar shortage in grapheme to phoneme correspondence, and some letters had more than one pronunciation depending on context, a phenomenon known as *polyvalence*.³⁹⁹

The problem of using writing to understand speech is compounded when attempting to factor in the variations that exist in oral vernaculars and how pronunciation changes and shifts in different English-speaking communities. Similar dilemmas exist when analyzing Hebrew texts and attempting to derive the phonological inventory from the limitations of the written word, a difficulty which is further compounded by the fact that Semitic languages were originally transcribed without vowels. Therefore, Judges 12 is a both sociologically and linguistically valuable to scholars because it serves as the single documented instance in which phonetic variations in oral speech are given explicit attention. Because of the extreme dearth of phonological data, the reconstruction of ancient Hebrew dialectology is dependent on other means to garner necessary information to fill in the linguistic lacuna.

The documentation of phonological differences betrays the writers' cognizance regarding the delicate nature of the relationship between politics and speech patterns. One could even contend that the awareness exhibited by Biblical writers regarding the fluid nature of language and its permutations equipped them to function as dialectologists, as they inadvertently engaged in *perceptual dialectology*. Prior to the crystallization of dialectology as an academic discipline

³⁹⁹ Moran, William, "The Hebrew Language in its Northwest Semitic Background," in *Amarna Studies: Collected Writings*, ed. John Huehnergard and Shlomo Izre'el, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 204-205

and the systematization of its methodology, “characterizations of dialect areas were intuitive and casual.”⁴⁰⁰ While their primary goal was the recording of historical events, the explicit attention given to dialectal variance constitutes an informal and intuitive characterization of the linguistic geography of the region during the time. The Shibboleth incident served as a means to create a partial dialectal taxonomy, as speakers who exhibited a specific linguistic trait could immediately be assigned to a particular sub-community. Outside of the Shibboleth incident, however, there is little available little linguistic data that will aid us in understanding the phonological differences in ancient Hebrew dialects. Rendsburg in his article, “Ancient Hebrew Phonology,” acknowledges the difficulty of phonological reconstruction in dialect. He writes: “Differences in phonology are more difficult to demonstrate. In presenting the phonology of ancient Hebrew, the main we refer to is Standard Judahite Hebrew.”⁴⁰¹ Although the evidence of phonological variation is limited, there are other ways to better understand the dialectology of ancient Hebrew.

Reconstruction of Lexical Differences in Dialect

While accent and phonemic patterns are an important tool used in quantifying the mutual intelligibility of modern languages, other elements of language also warrant consideration when developing or reconstructing a linguistic geographical dataset. For instance, the analysis of lexical differences is also an invaluable resource for understanding the nuances of language use across a given geographical expanse. The disparity in the lexical terms used by various groups of

⁴⁰⁰ J.K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill, *Dialectology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 14.

⁴⁰¹ Rendsburg, “Ancient Hebrew Phonology,” 67.

individuals is known as *lexical distance*.⁴⁰² Speakers using various terms to express the same concept is yet another approach in the field that has proven useful for the classification of language varieties. Coupled with data acquired from phonological studies, one might be better able to develop a more comprehensive linguistic taxonomy.

Nonetheless, the use of lexicon is by no means infallible, especially when pertaining to the reconstruction of the dialectology of textually preserved languages. A notable example is Middle English, where scholars disagree over the lexical items used as dialectal indicators.⁴⁰³ While lexicon can help inform the study of dialectology, biblical scholars also face a similar challenge when examining the use of certain lexical items and other existing semantic equivalents. Although there is greater attestation of lexical distance than phonological variants, it is difficult to achieve consensus regarding which specific items constitute markers of dialects. In fact, the reliance on biblical vocabulary to elicit any linguistic truths or derive any postulate is a highly speculative endeavor, as Avi Hurvitz warns in his classic article, “The Chronological Significance of ‘Aramaisms’ in Biblical Hebrew.”⁴⁰⁴ Hurvitz shows that it is difficult to contend that a particular lexeme or word is exclusively of Aramaic origin, given the possibility that it could originate from other sources or be the result of other influence. This aligns with Segal’s

⁴⁰² Jon Nerbonne and Peter Kleiweg. "Toward a dialectological yardstick." *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics* 14, no. 2-3 (2007): 148-166.

⁴⁰³ Hans Peters, “On the state and possible aims of Middle English word geography,” in *Historical Dialectology: Regional and Social*. ed. Jacek Fisiak (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), 396-416.

⁴⁰⁴ A. Hurvitz, “The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew,” 234–240.

suggestion that many so-called Aramaisms within the Bible may actually be transplanted from colloquial speech.⁴⁰⁵

One encounters a similar problem when attempting to reconstruct ancient Hebrew dialectology on the basis of lexical analysis. In order to do so, one must operate under the inherently fallacious assumption that specific words or jargon that differ from more commonly found equivalents are evidence of the interpolation of non-dialectal sources into the text, while this is not necessarily the case. In the case of Biblical Hebrew, Rendsburg has postulated the existence of a geographical northern dialect largely based on ostensibly incongruent lexical items,⁴⁰⁶ an argument that will be examined in further detail within this chapter. Nonetheless, while this hypothesized northern dialect would explain some of the peculiarities within certain parts of the textual corpus, his assertion has also been met with a fair amount of resistance. Daniel C. Fredericks challenges Rendsburg's claim, remarking that certain linguistic elements used as dialect markers may actually emanate from other sources: "It has been suggested that certain grammatical and lexical items in Qohelet are probably more indicative of a colloquial dialect than a geographic dialect."⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, while theories of dialect geography are well grounded and useful for understanding the lexical inconsistencies within the text, it is important

⁴⁰⁵ Moses H. Segal, "Mišnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 20, no. 4, (1908): 736. Regarding the presence of Aramaic in the Old Testament and the tendency of scholars to quickly classify certain phrases and words as Aramaisms, he writes the following: "Many of the so-called grammatical Aramaisms in the Old Testament are nothing but colloquial or dialectal, but none the less genuine Hebraic, forms which generally turn up again as the normal types in Mishnaic Hebrew."

⁴⁰⁶ Gary A. Rendsburg. "A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon." *Orient* 38 (2003): 5-35.

⁴⁰⁷ Daniel C. Fredericks, "A North Israelite Dialect in the Hebrew Bible? Questions of Methodology," *Hebrew Studies* 37 (1996): 9.

to note that it may not be the only explanation. The provenance of a particular word cannot always be accurately determined, as numerous conflicting theories regarding its presence may exist. Nonetheless, while the scholarly debate surrounding the issue may be highly contentious, geographic dialectology has obvious merit and continues to be a valid academic approach. It is also paramount to note that while scholars have taken issue with the way lexical items are interpreted, the existence of linguistic inconsistencies is not disputed. The text is indeed full of various inconsistencies, but the precise origin of each unusual lexeme remains enigmatic.

However, this dissertation argues that internal variation in the vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew is a sign of dialect consciousness. Authors were aware that certain words did not belong to the standard language, yet they used them in order to achieve specific literary goals.

Hebrew as an Internally Diverse Language

Dialectal variation is a common phenomenon seen in most world languages today. Previous chapters of the dissertation confined our discussions of linguistic disparity between the formal and informal extremes of a language, yet this is only one of the ways languages exhibit internal diversity. To dichotomize language as “standard” versus “dialect” represents a gross oversimplification. The dialect diversity found within modern languages is remarkable, and applying the uniformitarian principle allows us to argue that a similar level of diversity must have existed in ancient languages as well.

We have previously contended that Aramaic exhibited extreme internal diversity and was comprised of a universal codified register together with the continued existence of numerous oral vernaculars in quotidian communication across the Aramaic-speaking realm. In the case of Aramaic, geography seems to be a significant contributing factor to the immense linguistic variation attested, as people dispersed across a massive continental expanse will inevitably

develop divergent speech patterns. Essentially, as demonstrated with the earlier problematization of Aramaic, the language experienced the unique combination of natural and social conditions that account for its complex linguistic composition. Conversely, Hebrew was not nearly as pervasive a language and did not enjoy the same geographic reach, resulting in greater uncertainty regarding the magnitude and disparity of linguistic diversity within the Hebrew language (based on the uniformitarian principle, however, the disparity would be less). Nonetheless, although geography is important, it is by no means the sole influencing factor determining the amount of internal variability within a language. Indeed, there are other extraneous elements that may have potentially been responsible for the internal variation attested within the Hebrew Bible.

Reason for Linguistic Anomalies in the Hebrew Bible: Source of Contention

While it is convenient to conceive of Hebrew as a uniform and linguistically homogeneous entity, the reality is that the spoken language exhibited a rich variety of vernacular nuances and local innovations across the geographic terrain it dominated. Although the written text does not reflect the full range of differences in spoken language, the biblical corpus does provide evidence of dialectal variability in oral Hebrew. For instance, the presence of numerous linguistic anomalies and inexplicable features in the Bible seems to prove that strands of unstandardized colloquial varieties of Hebrew have been subtly interwoven into the text. We believe that linguistic curiosities are one of the greatest sources of evidence for claiming that Hebrew was an internally diverse language.

Other scholars attribute linguistic oddities to other reasons.⁴⁰⁸ Scholars are at variance when trying to determine which linguistic irregularities are the consequence of natural language change that occurs with the passage of time and which are the result of other circumstances. For instance, linguistic variation within the Hebrew Bible is commonly explicated as being the result of the text's redaction and composition over an extended period of time; as such, some sections feature archaic vestiges of an older linguistic stratum while other books are written in a later, more standard version of Hebrew. These scholars have developed a taxonomy to more effectively organize and interpret the various layers of linguistic stratification found within the Biblical text, employing terminology such as Archaic, Standard, and Late Biblical Hebrew,⁴⁰⁹ all in an attempt to attribute overt differences and oddities to a specific time period. Anomalous features can be attributed to being characteristic of a different time period.

⁴⁰⁸ Ian Young and Robert Rezetko, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts: Volumes 1: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 3. See also Jacobus A. Naudé, "Linguistic dating of Biblical Hebrew texts: The chronology and typology debate." *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 36, no. 2 (2010): 1-22, and Jan Joosten and Ronald Hendel, *How Old is the Hebrew Bible?: A Linguistic, Textual, and Historic Study*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁴⁰⁹ For further reading on the traditional historical linguistic approach used to analyzing the various stages of Hebrew, c.f. Kutscher, Edward Y. *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982, also Rabin, Chaim, *A Short History of the Hebrew Language*. Jerusalem: Haomanim Press, 1974, and Schniedewind, William, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins Through the Rabbinic Period*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. This dissertation does not dispute the designations of "archaic, standard, and late" given to Hebrew but emphasizes that temporal differences do not wholly account for the linguistic variability within the Biblical text. C.f. *A Social History of Hebrew*, p.88-98 for a description of Israelian Hebrew, the contemporaneous northern counterpart of Standard Hebrew, also Rendsburg, Gary A. "A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon." *Orient* 38 (2003): 5-35

However, Ian Young in his article, “Biblical Texts Cannot be Dated Linguistically” cautions against subscribing to the chronological labels of “archaic,” “standard,” and “late,” which emerged from the historical linguistic approach to Hebrew:

Linguistic evidence alone is not able to date biblical texts. None of the linguistic criteria used to date texts either early or late is strong enough to compel scholars to consider an argument made on non-linguistic grounds. All linguistic evidence can be explained in more than one chronological setting.⁴¹⁰

Indeed, linguistic peculiarities punctuate the Biblical corpus sporadically; however, according to Young, these should not be viewed as infallible markers of linguistic chronology. He is critical of the scholarly community being too apt to embrace this historical classification of Hebrew. While there is some merit to the historical linguistic approach and the chronological divisions organized by scholars do help to explain some of the linguistic oddities of the text, one should not exclude the plausibility of alternative explanations. The historical linguistic approach does not adequately explain all of the textual anomalies, some of which were likely the result of something other than temporal differences. It is here that we propose that the dialectal diversity of Hebrew is the reason for many of the unconventional lexical and morphological features of the text. We contend that linguistic variability within the Hebrew Bible was the consequence of both historical evolution and dialectal diversity.

Proof for the Existence of Dialects within Hebrew

Apart from the Shibboleth incident in Judges 12, there is little explicit mention or direct allusion to dialectal diversity within the Hebrew Bible. Nonetheless, this signifies that authors of the text simply did not conceive of the spoken varieties in the same taxonomic way as modern

⁴¹⁰ Ian Young, “Biblical Texts Cannot Be Dated Linguistically.” *Hebrew Studies* 46 (2005): 341.

linguistics or anthropology, yet the writers were most certainly aware of the minute differences and linguistic nuances that distinguished speech communities from one another. Although the limited textual record does not accurately reflect this, early Levantine dialect geography was comprised of multiple distinct linguistic enclaves, and speakers were cognizant of the variations in vernacular of each locality.⁴¹¹ A similar situation certainly existed in ancient Israel, although the precise range of dialectal distance within ancient Hebrew is difficult to quantify given the constraints of the textual and epigraphic corpus. Nonetheless, linguistic peculiarities have been noted by scholars, and these ostensibly inexplicable morphological or lexical elements constitute the core of any argument for dialectal diversity. Young in his article “Evidence of Diversity in Pre-exilic Judahite Hebrew” builds his argument for the postulated existence of internal dialectal variation in Hebrew upon general observations regarding language. “One would presume from the nature of language that there were some kind of variation between standard literary Hebrew of Jerusalem and the spoken dialects.”⁴¹² Drawing a conclusion based on “the nature of language” betrays the insufficient empirical evidence regarding the spoken varieties of ancient Hebrew; consequently, one must compensate for this deficit in knowledge by relying on generalized axioms and principles governing language use and development. Young’s assertion is important for our study, as we contend that what limited evidence of diverse vernaculars preserved the Biblical corpus reveals the dialect consciousness of the writers. However, before

⁴¹¹ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 29. Schniedewind writes the following in the context of the linguistic situation predating Hebrew and how local Canaanites were separated into dialectal communities and long aware of those differences. The same could certainly be extrapolated to Hebrew and the linguistic variations seen across the tribes: “Although we have written texts preserved from this early period, they do not fully reflect the nuances of Canaanite dialects that must have existed among the cities, towns, and villages of the Levant during the second millennium B.C.E.”

⁴¹² Ian Young, “Evidence of Diversity in Pre-Exilic Judahite Hebrew,” *Hebrew Studies* 38, (1997): 7.

further promulgating his view on pre-exilic linguistic diversity, one must point out the presence of inherent weaknesses with the formation of his declarative that require additional exposition in order to render the overall argument admissible as support for the scholarly objectives of this study.

The greatest fallacy is that Young's assertion operates under the presumption that spoken language is by nature internally heterogeneous with little reference to the outside disciplines of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology.⁴¹³ By not including data or content from these fields, Young's supposition relies too heavily on general observation and personal perception. However, integrating sociolinguistic research allows for a more comprehensive explication of the otherwise arbitrary "nature of languages." William Labov in his monograph *Principles of Linguistic Change* attributes the present diversity of world languages largely to the forces of *divergence*, where speakers who experience migration or severed contact will inevitably experience differences in their manner of speaking.⁴¹⁴ The principle of divergence provides an explanation for language change and linguistic diversity and can be applied retroactively to the study of ancient Hebrew spoken dialects. Variety in the oral vernaculars of Hebrew could therefore be expected simply based on the natural constrictions disallowing constant contact between clusters of interlocutors, leading to natural differences in phonology (as seen in Judges 12) as well as vocabulary. Relying again on research from sociolinguistics, Labov mentions that the general rate of divergence based on glottochronology is approximately 15% per

⁴¹³ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 20.

⁴¹⁴ William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change: Volume 3: Cognitive and Cultural Factors*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 5.

millennium.⁴¹⁵ Although this might not seem significant, this is enough to produce variation in lexicon after several centuries. Many such lexical variations are preserved in the Biblical text and now constitute an important resource for the reconstruction of Hebrew dialectology. Therefore, with the integration of data from sociolinguistics, one can state with greater certainty that dialectal diversity was an inevitable reality for the ancient Israelites. Although the various speech forms subsumed under “Hebrew” were likely still mutually intelligible, the differences would have been overt enough for speakers to be cognizant of them. This same cognizance is preserved in the text with the inclusion of peculiar elements which would have been characteristic of other dialects.

Northern Dialect of Hebrew

Although the Biblical corpus is written mostly in a uniform codified register of Hebrew, scholars have long posited the permeation of dialectal influence into the text. While no section of the Bible is composed exclusively in a colloquial vernacular, there are linguistic nuances which can be attributed to the influence of a nonstandard form of Hebrew. C.F. Burney was one of the first to recognize remnants of a distinct oral vernacular embedded in the historical narratives of the Hebrew Bible.⁴¹⁶ Of particular interest to him are the Books of Kings and more specifically, the sections which feature protagonists and events pertaining to the Northern Kingdom. The distinctiveness of the language used in these portions of the text leads him to postulate the existence of a geographically northern dialect that influenced the composition of writings that

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 5. For more regarding the methodology in measuring and assessing rates of language change and lexical replacement, c.f. Lawrence Johnson, "A rate of change index for language." *Language in Society* 5, no. 2 (1976): 165-172.

⁴¹⁶ C.F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings*, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1903)

focus on this region. He concludes that “certain peculiarities of diction probably belong to the dialect of Northern Palestine.”⁴¹⁷ Ernst Knauf, a staunch proponent of the multi-dialectal view of Hebrew, also espouses a similar view. He argues that the Biblical text is composed in a variety of Hebrew from the south, yet influences of northern provenance (possibly from multiple dialects) have seeped into the text. He refers to these dialects as “Israelitisch” (Israelite) in contrast to their southern counterparts, which he identifies as “Judäisch” (Judahite).

Das alte Testament in seiner vorliegenden Form ist in keiner der zwei oder drei israelitischen Sprachen abgefaßt. Doch gibt es Indizien, daß Israelitische Wörter und Texte in das Alte Testament eingegangen sind.⁴¹⁸

The Old Testament in its current form is not written in any one of the two or three Israelite languages. However, there are indicators that Israelite words and texts have permeated the Old Testament.

These scholarly breakthroughs would be adopted by later scholars like Rendsburg and would crystallize into the idea of a “northern dialect” of ancient Hebrew, which eventually would become known in scholarship as “Israelian Hebrew.”⁴¹⁹ This reconstructed dialect stands in contrast to the more standardized Hebrew of the Bible, which was standardized predominantly based on southern dialects.

Burney’s early research and initial conclusions represent a pivotal moment in the study of Hebrew dialectology, where the notion of dialectal traces is raised as a possible explanation for linguistic oddities. Furthermore, the association between the linguistic and the literary is crucial.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 208.

⁴¹⁸ Knauf, “War Biblisch Hebräisch eine Sprache,” 19.

⁴¹⁹ Gary A. Rendsburg, “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon,” *Orient* 38 (2003): 5-35, c.f. also, Gary Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*. (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2002).

Texts that pertain to the Northern kingdom are argued to retain the flavor and distinctiveness of a corresponding “northern dialect.” As mentioned previously, writing in Hebrew would seem to have required the use of formal literary conventions that were not necessarily reflective of oral speech, making Hebrew a diglossic language. However, this does not preclude the occasional use of dialectal equivalents or lexical items *in the appropriate context*. At first, one might be inclined to suggest that such “peculiarities of diction” are simply the result of carelessness or failure to adhere to the standards of formal Hebrew; however, research in diglossic languages has shown that speakers are highly conscious of language as a result of needing to balance both the spoken and written forms. Therefore, the insertion of dialectal words should be viewed as an intended occurrence. Moreover, the alignment between content and language is significant. Passages that Burney has categorized as “narratives of the Northern Kingdom”⁴²⁰ are written in a form of Hebrew influenced by that local speech patterns. The Hebrew of these passages stands in contrast to Biblical Hebrew in general, which is believed to have the Judahite Hebrew of the south.⁴²¹ One must be careful not to conflate dialect and speech with written text. In fact, scholars like Knauf opine that Biblical Hebrew was purely a literary language and did not exist as a natural spoken tongue.⁴²² However, we argue that the use of northernisms in the Biblical corpus means that there was some attempt on the part of the authors to represent an oral vernacular of the north.

⁴²⁰ Rendsburg, Gary A., “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon,” 207.

⁴²¹ Knauf, “War Biblisch Hebräisch eine Sprache,” 21.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 20.

The Use of Northern Hebrew as a Sign of Dialect Consciousness

Furthermore, the alignment of the language and the literary content is too overt to be dismissed as an inadvertent result of a lapse in consciousness. In the case of these northern narratives, authors deliberately replaced numerous lexical items of Standard Biblical Hebrew/Judahite Hebrew with words that clearly have dialectal provenance. For example, in the stories of Elijah and Elisha, two prophets originating from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the lexicon is remarkably distinct. Words such as אדרת (meaning “coat”) stand in stark contrast with the more common Judean equivalent מעיל.⁴²³ The unusual meaning of the word is concentrated in parts of the Bible that have a northern context, making it cogent to presume that this was a word borrowed from a northern vernacular. Numerous other examples of distinct lexicon include: נקד (“shepherd”), גהר (“to prostrate oneself”) and ארמון (“palace”), all of which have well-established and more commonly used equivalents in Standard biblical corpus.⁴²⁴ The unique words are confined in their textual scope, only existing in sections of the Bible that relate to the history and affairs of the North.

The examination of these terms and comparison with their more pervasive equivalents is a methodological approach in dialectology known as “linguistic contrast.”⁴²⁵ Applying this method allows for a more accurate assessment of whether a selected text constitutes a dialectal specimen. These linguistic observations in conjunction with the perfect parallel between literary content and word usage provide compelling evidence that dialect influenced particular portions

⁴²³ William Schniedewind and Daniel Sivan. “The Elijah-Elisha Narratives: A Test Case for the Northern Dialect of Hebrew.” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 87, (1997): 326-327.

⁴²⁴ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 98.

⁴²⁵ Avi Hurvitz, “Linguistic criteria for dating problematic biblical texts.” *Hebrew Abstracts* (1973): 78.

of the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, it reveals the language consciousness of the authors, who infused elements of dialect into their writings only during the most appropriate occasions – northern dialect for writings about the northern kingdom: “The presence of linguistic contrast shows that the absence of an element from the Judean texts is not a matter of coincidence.”⁴²⁶

The use of dialect during critical moments is additional proof of dialect consciousness within the Hebrew Bible as well as the power of authorial intentionality. Writers were keenly aware of how to wield language as a means to achieve literary objectives. Writing in Hebrew required the mastery of a formal standard that differed from speech, but elements from oral speech are used strategically at the right times in order to align with the content of the text and to reinforce an underlying message. In these Biblical accounts, dialect consciousness becomes manifest as a potent textual force, used to achieve the literary objectives of the authors. Regarding this issue of author awareness, Young writes the following:

I have argued that the prophet Elisha is characterized in Kings by certain peculiarities of speech... If, however, as is common, one sees a significant Israelian element in the composition of the stories, the purpose of the characterization would seem most likely to mark Elisha as being from a particular dialect area. This, like the Shibboleth incident, would indicate a consciousness of dialect divisions within the broad sphere of Israelian Hebrew.⁴²⁷

The use of supposed “northernisms” is a way for authors to show the distinctiveness of the prophets, places, and events being featured in the narratives set in northern Israel. Together with Judges 12, the stories about the northern prophets are signs of dialect consciousness on the part of Biblical authors, a textual phenomenon that started before the exile but would continue into the Persian Period.

⁴²⁶ Schniedewind and Sivan, “The Elijah-Elisha Narratives, 305.

⁴²⁷ Ian Young, “Evidence of Diversity in Pre-exilic Judahite Hebrew,” 10.

The Elisha-Elijah narratives are perhaps the most obvious cases but are certainly not the only examples of Northern Hebrew. Rendsburg goes beyond the Elisha-Elijah narratives and proposes a corpus of Northern texts that includes the blessing to the Northern tribes in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 as well as numerous “Northern” Psalms.⁴²⁸ While the dramatic expansion of the scope of Northern Hebrew may be overly ambitious, Rendsburg is right to spot parallels between literary content and language use. The relationship between these two is paramount for understanding language consciousness as a textual phenomenon. Writers viewed language as a tool which could be wielded and manipulated to achieve certain goals. Although the linguistic evidence used to reconstruct this hypothesized northern dialect is still debated,⁴²⁹ the primary concern of this present study is neither to affirm nor deny the validity of claims from either side. The speculated existence of northernisms is useful for showing how language consciousness affects the writing of the text as well as its interpretation. With writers knowing how to use formal Hebrew for writing, the use of dialectal language within the text must serve an exegetical purpose.

Problems with the Term “Northern Hebrew”

Subdividing Hebrew as “northern” or “southern” may be a problematic approach because it presumes that the division of the United Monarchy into North and South was the starting point for dialectal divergence. At this point, in order to avoid conflating both writing and speech, I will use the term “Hebrew” to refer to the written language, and the terms “Judean” and “Israelian” to refer to dialects. It is also possible that linguistic variety within the written Hebrew language

⁴²⁸ Rendsburg, “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew,” 8

⁴²⁹ Schniedewind and Sivan, “The Elijah-Elisha Narratives,” 326

(Hebrew) emerged as a result of political divisions, and the split of the Kingdom of Israel into two distinct political entities would have likely resulted in the oral vernaculars of the people drifting further from one another during the period of separation (developing into “Judean” in the south and “Israelian” in the north).

However, it is untenable to attribute dialectal differences to a single political event for numerous reasons. Firstly, it is uncertain to what extent the kingdoms remained linguistically isolated from one another. Although the relations between the northern and southern kingdom were punctuated with hostilities and friction, the biblical text documents instances of rulers from both sides meeting with one another, improving significantly under the reign of Jehosaphat. This evidence of contact between the two sides raises questions regarding how the language would have been affected due to political circumstances. It seems that there was adequate contact to preserve linguistic commonalities and render communication possible between the two sides. Secondly, it is difficult to quantitatively measure the differences in dialects, and there is insufficient data to attempt a substantive reconstruction of a potential northern dialect, although Rendsburg does claim that the remnants of linguistic evidence suffice for the compilation of a cursory grammar of Northern Hebrew.⁴³⁰ Lastly, to apply the designations of “northern” and “southern” may be anachronistic from a diachronic perspective, as it is quite possible and even likely that dialects and differing speech forms were long in existence before the division of the kingdom. Judges 12 (which will be further discussed below) is a notable example of how discernible dialectal variations existed from early times. Unfortunately, the relative dearth of other morphological and phonological data from the early time periods of Israelite history

⁴³⁰ Gary Rendsburg, "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), 227

prevents us from making more informed statements regarding the intricacies of the dialectal situation; one can only assert that different dialects must have existed, but the geographic labels “northern” or “southern” may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the origin or complexity of dialectal divergence. Dialectal diversity was likely a natural linguistic phenomenon in ancient Judean/Israelian speech communities and should not be assumed to be the direct product of political events. In addition, the labels of “northern” and “southern” are not only anachronistic but are also inaccurate. Na’ama Pat-El in particular has heavily criticized these labels as being based on theology and politics rather than on actual linguistic data: “Several scholars have pointed to differences between the monarchies based on the textual evidence. These differences, however, are primarily theological and political... None of these claims relies on linguistic material, which constitutes a separate and unrelated argument.”⁴³¹ For Pat-El, the term “Northern Hebrew” is problematic because it is derived from the political situation of the time and may not be an accurate reflection of the dialectology of the region. Nonetheless, one must remember that language division is inherently political, as in the old adage, “A language is a dialect with an army and navy.”

Furthermore, it is also important not to assume the fallacious position of attributing all linguistic oddities to a reconstructed Northern variety simply because they differ from standard Hebrew. Fredericks remarks with skepticism on the array of dialectal theories concocted as means to explain textual or orthographical peculiarities, calling these postulates “tentative and probative hypotheses... offered to explain the reasons for what one does see as anomalous in the

⁴³¹ Na’ama Pat-El, “Israelian Hebrew: A Re-Evaluation,” *Vetus Testamentum* (2017): 3-4

Hebrew Bible.”⁴³² Waters’ statement underscores the subjectivities of the entire endeavor; scholars have been apt to develop elegant solutions to explain linguistic features they *perceive* as unusual. Therefore, this prescriptivist mindset can be problematic when applied retroactively, as researchers attempt to define what kind of language patterns and jargon would have been considered “normal” or “standard” during the time. In addition, there are serious questions regarding the validity of this approach. Pat-El, for instance, contends that the majority of the features labelled by scholars like Rendsburg as “northern” are “attested throughout the Bible, not just in alleged northern texts.”⁴³³ One must be careful not to immediately assume that a less common linguistic feature is a northernism. While certain texts do indeed demonstrate linguistic peculiarities and lexical features that have more commonly used equivalents in standard written Hebrew, one must avoid tendencies to oversimplify and assign broad categories.

There is great temptation to dichotomize the *written language* (as writing has “standardized versions,” in contrast to vernaculars, which does not) when examining the language map of Israel/Judah, resorting to labels such as standard versus nonstandard, northern versus southern. While these appellations do bring us closer to securing a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic realities of the time, they are not completely reliable as taxonomic labels because they do not fully reflect the tremendous variability of spoken language. Arabic is a typical example of a language that defies easy classification and subdivision. In his classic article “Diglossia,” Ferguson refers to classical Arabic as the “high language” (H) and colloquial

⁴³² Fredericks, “A North Israelite Dialect in the Hebrew Bible? Questions of Methodology,” 8.

⁴³³ Pat-El, Na’ama, “Israelian Hebrew: A Re-Evaluation,” 8.

Arabic as the low language (L).⁴³⁴ For him, it is important to underscore this notion of duality within Arabic as a means to illustrate the phenomenon of diglossia. Nonetheless, diglossia may still be an overly simple way to describe Arabic, with its multiplicity of dialects and its extensive sociolect continuum, with up to five different levels on the spectrum of formality.⁴³⁵

Furthermore, “Colloquial Arabic” differs from country to country, and even within each country, there is a vast array of spoken vernaculars. For instance, “Egyptian Arabic” does not imply that all denizens of Egypt share a common speech pattern that differs from other nations. On the contrary, the Cairene dialect has emerged as the most influential form of Arabic within the nation and has become a linguistic synecdoche, with their dialect being taken as the sole representative of colloquial Egyptian. Numerous other varieties exist within Egypt, especially in the southern regions of the country. Versteegh writes that these “southern varieties... contrast with the prestige dialect of Cairo.”⁴³⁶ The existence of radically divergent dialects within the same country shows the difficulty in achieving a straightforward dialectal taxonomy, as names based on geography do not sufficient account for the linguistic diversity found within a given locality or region. “Egyptian Arabic” as a term is misleading because it actually only corresponds to a dialect spoken in a small sliver of area in the capital region, which enjoys unparalleled linguistic hegemony.

Cognizance regarding the challenge of dialect labelling within intricate linguistic systems like Arabic helps to inform our approach to understanding Hebrew and its subcategories.

⁴³⁴ Ferguson, “Diglossia,” 327.

⁴³⁵ Badawi, El-Said, *Mustawayat al-`Arabiyya al-mu`asira fi Misr*. (in Arabic). Levels of contemporary Arabic in Egypt. (Cairo, Daar al-Ma`arif. 1973).

⁴³⁶ Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 161.

Grouping linguistic deviations together under the overarching labels of “Northern Hebrew” or “Israelian Hebrew,” based on the Northern Kingdom, seems appealing, but it is important to avoid assuming that there were merely two kinds of oral Hebrew. Rendsburg has himself advised against adopting a monolithic label, proposing that the term refers to a “dialectal bundle.”⁴³⁷ Likewise, Ernst Knauf avoids generalizing the linguistic situation, claiming that there were at least two or three kinds of dialectal Northern Hebrew.⁴³⁸ One cannot simply resort to dichotomous labels such as “northern” versus “southern.” These labels are useful for creating a loose subcategorization of oral Hebrew varieties, but they are not wholly representative of the dialectal diversity and linguistic complexities of ancient Israel and Judah.

Being aware of the imprecision of linguistic labelling is crucial in order to avoid misconstruing and misrepresenting the language map of ancient Israel as a mere contrast between North and South. Rendsburg believes that there must have been internal variety within the northern vernaculars, although the relative scarcity of data does not allow for more precise conjectures regarding the extent of differences.⁴³⁹ Schniedewind and Sivan also postulate that a multiplicity of dialects existed and that the term “northernism” is not reflective of one particular dialect but is indicative of general areal features and shared linguistic traits: “The words in this section are broadly grouped under the heading ‘northernisms.’ It must be recognized, however, that these words may reflect a variety of non-classical dialects such that the designation

⁴³⁷ Gary A. Rendsburg, “Ancient Hebrew Phonology,” 67.

⁴³⁸ Knauf, Ernst Axel. “War ‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache,” 22.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

‘northernism’ does not necessarily reflect a single dialect.”⁴⁴⁰ Overlooking the presumed diversity within each linguistic designation of Hebrew would constitute a major fallacy in the understanding of dialect and human speech patterns. However, the constrictions of the textual corpus and available epigraphic evidence do not allow for more detailed deconstructions. What is important for the scope of the present study is to acknowledge the limitations of the data, while applying available resources to corroborate the main contention regarding linguistic consciousness in the Bible. The postulated existence of a northern dialect continuum and its partial preservation within the Bible are valuable for arguing that writers infused elements of northern dialects into their writings to achieve a specific purpose. In the historical accounts of Elijah and Elisha, “these deviations [from Standard Biblical Hebrew] are part of the literary style of the narrative.”⁴⁴¹ Language consciousness affects the type of Hebrew used in the text. Speculating the type of Hebrew, however, would be an endeavor in futility. Yet what is clear is that the style of writing used to document the lives of the northern prophets is markedly different from the uniform style characteristic of the majority of the text. Dialect consciousness is an ever-present phenomenon of the text, and it is useful for understanding the reasons authors interspersed elements of colloquial language into their writings.

In sum, writers of the text were aware of the minute differences that separated speech communities from another, and the Biblical text embeds “non-standard features” in order to cement the affiliation between certain speech styles with individuals of non-Judean

⁴⁴⁰ Schniedewind and Sivan, “The Elijah-Elisha Narratives, 325.

⁴⁴¹ Schniedewind, *A Social History*, 90.

background.⁴⁴² In the midst of a relatively homogeneous text, these peculiar features immediately stand out, allowing readers to immediately make this association. Writing and the redaction of texts were tools not only to document historical events and individual accounts, but also to convey subtle messages to the intended audience and to render them cognizant of the inextricability between language and place of origin. The embedding of Northern dialectal features into appropriate passages is an effectual means to achieve the literary goals of the authors and reveals their acute linguistic consciousness. Whether the intention was to render the style more authentic or was simply a means to distinguish particular “northern” sections from the rest of the corpus, language consciousness has left an indelible effect on the redaction of the Bible.

Further Dialect Consciousness: Foreign-sounding Hebrew

Linguistic variation and its permeation into the Biblical corpus are not the only unequivocal signs of dialect consciousness. Not only were writers aware of the variability within the Hebrew-speaking community (Shibboleth versus sibboleth, northern versus southern), they also observed and replicated differences in speech that arose from foreign influence. Many passages in the Hebrew Bible featuring individuals of non-Judahite and non-Israelite descent are written in a distinctive manner that is overtly different from the relative uniform style dominating the majority of the Hebrew Bible. Examples include the Job narrative, the Jacob-Laban story in Genesis 31, and Balaam in Numbers 22.⁴⁴³ While one may be initially confused by the presence

⁴⁴² Ian Young, "The 'Northernisms' of the Israelite narratives in Kings." *ZAH* 8 (1995): 69.

⁴⁴³ Gary A. Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible." *Israel Oriental Studies* 15 (1995).

of these linguistic oddities, Gary Rendsburg argues that they are an integral part of the text, a tool wielded by authors to underscore the foreign nature of the events and the protagonists. Although Rendsburg does not explicitly use the term “language consciousness” to describe the underlying force that affects the nature of the redaction, he writes that “the remarkable originality and ingenuity of these authors led them to seek such variation and to mark foreignness in the language itself.”⁴⁴⁴ The evidence is too compelling for it to be merely dismissed as simply the subconscious permeation of foreign influence into the text. The same logic used to argue language consciousness in instances of dialectal variation can be extrapolated and applied to contend that this phenomenon is clearly visible in passages that describe and pertain to foreigners. The alignment between literary content and linguistic style is too overt and well-executed to constitute an inadvertent coincidence. On the contrary, writers were aware of the appropriate language to use when writing, and the infusion of non-standard linguistic features must certainly be intended and serve an explicit purpose. Writers were in control of the language and jargon they were using; therefore, they were able to successfully manipulate it when necessary to show and emphasize foreignness.⁴⁴⁵

Style Switching in Genesis 30-31: Dialectal Consciousness and Aramaic-sounding Hebrew

Rendsburg is not the only scholar who has addressed the issue of foreign speech in the Hebrew Bible. S.A. Kaufman had observed that the style of the text would change in order to stylistically render the speech of non-Israelite individuals as different, in order to highlight the

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 188.

foreign backdrop of some non-Israelite individuals. He refers to this alternation in style to create contrast between Israelite and non-Israelite as “style-switching.”⁴⁴⁶ Following in the footsteps of Kaufman, Brian Bompiani has published a recent set of articles where he examines the phenomenon of style-switching in narratives featuring individuals of foreign ethnicity, looking specifically at the Jacob-Laban accounts in the book of Genesis. In these passages, the oscillation between two distinct styles is irrefutable, with the most obvious example coming from Genesis 31:47.⁴⁴⁷

וַיִּקְרָא-לוֹ לְכוֹן יֵגַר שְׂהַדוּתָא וַיַּעֲקֹב קָרָא לוֹ גַלְעָד . – בראשית 31:47

And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed. – Genesis 31:47

A potentially hostile confrontation between the two heads of household is dissipated, and both individuals enter into a mutual peace treaty and erect a heap of stones as a sign of their agreement. Nonetheless, what is linguistically and exegetically significant is that Jacob grants the site a Hebrew appellation (גַלְעָד), while his Aramean father-in-law names the place in Aramaic (יֵגַר שְׂהַדוּתָא). This is reminiscent of the linguistic contrast seen in the bilingual books of Ezra and Daniel. Unlike postexilic literature, however, the entire book of Genesis is composed solely in Hebrew with the exception of the Aramaic designation for the heap of rocks, but within the Hebrew itself, there are distinct features that writers have purposely inserted in order to distinguish the Jacob-Laban narratives linguistically. Jonas Greenfield was the first to remark on the heavy Aramaic influence within this section of the Hebrew text. Greenfield points out three

⁴⁴⁶ S. A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies), 55.

⁴⁴⁷ Brian Bompiani, "Style Switching in the Jacob and Laban Narratives." *Hebrew Studies* 55 (2014), 44.

unique lexical items in Genesis 30-31 that have corresponding Hebrew equivalents and ascribes these to Aramaic influence. All three examples are verbs, לֹא יִטְשֶׁנִּי (‘‘to leave, to permit’’), דָּבַק (‘‘to overtake’’), and יָצַל (‘‘to take away’’).⁴⁴⁸ These three verbs are unusual because one would expect to find the more common Hebrew versions, but these verbs form part of the inventory of foreign words and calques that have been purposefully integrated by authors in order to mark the narratives as linguistically distinct. Laban is an Aramean; hence, even his Hebrew has significant traces of his native Aramaic.

Rendsburg argues that although the narratives are composed in Hebrew, the two patriarchs likely communicated in Aramaic with one another.⁴⁴⁹ The abundance of Aramaic and quasi-Aramaic lexical items within the text betrays writer awareness that certain features would stand out as distinctly non-Hebraic for their audience. Unlike the writers of Ezra and Daniel, who wrote large portions of the text in the Aramaic language, it is uncertain whether the authors of Genesis and the Laban-Jacob narratives were proficient in Aramaic. While the Judahite community eventually developed competency in both Hebrew and Aramaic with the advent of powerful Aramaic-speaking empires in Mesopotamia, it seems that these texts were composed during an earlier era before the influence of Aramaic became pervasive across the Levant. In his article, ‘‘Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch,’’ Rendsburg argues that Genesis 30-31 must pre-date the Persian Period. He makes his contention on the basis that there are several lexical items and morphological structures that seem to be clearly Standard Biblical Hebrew, although

⁴⁴⁸ J. C. Greenfield, ‘‘Aramaic Studies and the Bible,’’ in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton. (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 110–130.

⁴⁴⁹ Gary A. Rendsburg, ‘‘Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch.’’ *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 168.

Late Biblical Hebrew innovated its own unique equivalents for these.⁴⁵⁰ While it is tempting to interpret the presence of Aramaic-like words and features to be evidence of composition during the Persian Period, Rendsburg's assertion is consistent with Avi Hurvitz's position in his article "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," where he argues that the attestation of Aramaic loanwords in certain texts and passages is by itself inadequate to justify a late dating of the text. The existence of Aramaic words must be corroborated by additional evidence to render such a claim tenable. Hurvitz writes: "The Aramaisms in Biblical Hebrew may be utilized as a criterion for lateness, but only when evaluated in the light of other linguistic phenomena associated with the text in which these Aramaisms occur."⁴⁵¹ The Jacob-Laban narratives cannot be attributed to the Late Biblical stratum of Hebrew merely due to the identification of supposed Aramaisms; instead another reason for this must exist. Writing protracted sections in Aramaic would be an impractical authorial move, as this would isolate a largely monolingual, pre-exilic audience.⁴⁵² The use of Aramaic thus serves another purpose altogether. It is not to be taken as a marker of linguistic dating, but rather it has a literary function: to capture readers' attention and to emphasize the foreignness of Laban. Writers may not even have had profound knowledge of the Aramaic language; it is quite plausible that their familiarity with it extended to only familiarity with some common verbs and parts of speech. However, impeccable Aramaic was not necessary for their objectives; they merely wished to

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁵¹ Avi Hurvitz, "The Chronological Significances of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," 240.

⁴⁵² Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the Foreign Factor," 179.

disperse enough Aramaic-like words intermittently throughout the text in order to render the work linguistically marked when read by a monolingual audience.

Language consciousness does not necessitate high mastery of multiple languages and speech forms. It only requires a general understanding in what features, shapes, and sounds differentiate linguistic varieties from one another. For the writers of Genesis 30-31, verbs like יִצַּל and יִדְבֶּק constituted signals of Aramaic-like speech. Whether or not they would have been able to document all events in the “original” language (as is done in postexilic literature) is another question altogether. Aramaic has broad influence in Genesis 30-31 (with Rendsburg identifying fifteen elements that he believes to be distinctly Aramaic⁴⁵³), and there is even an undisputed use of Aramaic in the naming of the heap of stones (יִגַּר שְׁהוּתָא). Yet Aramaic is not an integral part of the text as is the case with Ezra or Daniel. Writers wished to emphasize Laban’s foreign ethnicity and therefore altered the linguistic style of the text to make this obvious to the audience. The presence of peculiar verbs, which the audience would have recognized as characteristic of Aramean speech, is a clear signal of authorial intentionality in configuring the text to reflect the foreign setting in which Jacob found himself. Style-switching is an effective means to transmit information to the reader and to emphasize the non-Hebraic elements, characters, and environment of the stories. Although writers could not switch to the language of the narrative entirely to Aramaic, they deviated enough from the standard language of the corpus to signal to their audience that Jacob and Laban were not typical Israelite characters and to remind the readers of their Aramean heritage. The writers’ role in shaping the language to

⁴⁵³ Rendsburg, “Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch,” 168.

communicate subtle messages to their audience is yet another manifestation of the potency of language consciousness as a literary force.

Level of Sophistication of Dialect Consciousness: Variable Spelling in Job

Dialect consciousness is a ubiquitous phenomenon; all individuals are expected to possess a basic level of awareness regarding the linguistic nuances that differentiate oral vernaculars from their native idiom. While the majority of people may not be able to fully articulate or elaborate the precise nature of these differences, some individuals develop an increased sensitivity to specific distinguishing criteria. These criteria are known in dialectological studies as *isoglosses*, defined by Peter Trudgill as “the lines marking the boundaries between two regions which differ with respect to some linguistic feature (for instance, a lexical item, or the pronunciation of a particular word).”⁴⁵⁴ It is our contention that writers of the Biblical text had much more than a generalized understanding of dialectal differences – they demonstrated a level of sophistication in their ability to discern, imitate, and replicate characteristic isoglosses of other dialects. Key dialectal features were selected that would catch the attention of the audience and would be immediately recognizable as foreign-sounding. Biblical authors possessed an acute awareness of which specific elements could be readily identifiable as having foreign provenance.

The book of Job, for instance, is written in a form of Hebrew that is interlaced sporadically with foreign-sounding elements. Although the book of Job is set to a chronologically earlier period (contemporary to the patriarchs in Genesis), the framing of the

⁴⁵⁴ J.K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill. *Dialectology. 2nd edition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 89.

book is within the Persian Period,⁴⁵⁵ making it relevant for our understanding of language consciousness as a textual phenomenon during this time. Hurvitz writes that the prose sections that bookend Job are linguistically late, as “the author of the Prose Tale could not avoid certain phrases which are unmistakably characteristic of post-exilic Hebrew, thus betraying his actual late date.”⁴⁵⁶

One of the most significant examples of post-exilic language is the alternation between מלִים (*millim*) and מלִין (*millin*). Both of these are variants meaning “words,” showing a significant amount of metalinguistic consciousness on the part of the authors. Though the difference is slight, the former is found in Hebrew, while the latter is characteristic of Aramaic (or possibly of another related Semitic language).⁴⁵⁷ The interchange between these two forms cannot be coincidental or the product of haphazard redaction. The authors understood the differences between the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of the word and the literary implications it would have on the text.

And so it is with the author of Job: linguistic markers which identify the characters as Transjordanians were utilized to convey to the reader the foreignness of Job and his interlocutors. But they are not so prevalent as to ‘get in the way’ of the reader’s comprehension.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Avi Hurvitz, “The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered,” *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974): 17.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵⁷ For more regarding the language of the book of Job and whether there is possible substratal influence from Arabic, c.f. A. Guillaume, “The Arabic Background of the Book of Job,” in *Promise and Fulfillment: Essays Presented to S.H. Hooke*, ed. F.F. Bruce, (London, 1963), 106-127.

⁴⁵⁸ Rendsburg, “Linguistic Variation and the Foreign Factor,” 180.

The embedding of foreign-sounding elements in literary composition was a carefully implemented undertaking on the part of the Biblical authors. The form מלין is an example of the dialectal isoglosses that would serve as signals to their audience regarding the foreign ethnicity of the characters. However, the use of distinguishing linguistic nuances was done in moderation and does not obscure the meaning of the text. A slight orthographical change from מלים to מלין would not constitute an impediment in understanding the written accounts, but it gives the Hebrew a foreign touch. Furthermore, the writers of Job employed the two forms in almost equal proportions, with the Hebrew variant appearing ten times and its Aramaic equivalent occurring thirteen times.⁴⁵⁹ This balance testifies to the caution exercised on the part of the Biblical writers in order to avoid overwhelming their audience while simultaneously conveying an unmistakable message.

Orthography is often an inconspicuous manifestation of dialect consciousness as well as effective means to communicate information to the audience. The alternation between the spellings of מלים and מלין in the Book of Job is also important because of the meaning of the word in question. The word itself means “word” or “speech,” revealing a metalinguistic level of cognitive activity on the part of the writers. Changing the spelling for such an important word would be an immediate signal to the audience regarding the importance of language as a marker of identity. It is also significant because it is the only word that has this variation, underscoring that it is a conscious literary device. The variation between ין- and ים- occurs with no other words, except for this term because it is a loaded term referring to language. Oftentimes, different orthographical renderings do not correspond to actual changes in pronunciation; they

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 180.

are ways to assert one's identity. As Schniedewind writes, "Sociolinguistic research has shown that spelling practices are quite often dictated by social, political, and ideological factors."⁴⁶⁰ Spelling is a way to craft and assert identity;⁴⁶¹ its function is sociological just as much as it is linguistic. The alternation between *millim* and *millin*, therefore, is significant because it contributes to our understanding of how Biblical writers perceived themselves in relation to others who spoke differently. Furthermore, they were cognizant of the specific linguistic criteria that could be used to demarcate one dialect from another, as well as features that would be typical of foreigners. Therefore, while the book of Job is composed in Hebrew, there are adequate elements that resonate as foreign and particular to another community, so that the readership also remains constantly aware how differences in speech are correlated to differences in ethnicity and self-identification. While the ethnicity of Job now has become a source of variance among scholars, with some proposing the language to be representative of a quasi-Arabian vernacular⁴⁶² and others claiming Aramaic,⁴⁶³ it would have likely been apparent to the audience of the time. This betrays the high level of sophistication of dialect consciousness

⁴⁶⁰ Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*, 55

⁴⁶¹ Mark Sebba, *Spelling and Society: The Culture and Politics of Orthography around the World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160

⁴⁶² Frank Hugh Foster, "Is the Book of Job a Translation from an Arabic Original?" *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 49, no. 1 (1932): 21-45. Foster argues on the basis of a couple of elements that Job was possibly derived from an Arabic original: namely, the setting of the book in the desert as well as the presence of some idioms in the book that may have been derived from Arabic counterparts.

⁴⁶³ Edward L. Greenstein, "The Language of Job and Its Poetic Function." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122, no. 4 (2003): 658. Greenstein argues that certain lexemes such as עָרַק (meaning "to flee") and קָהָה (meaning "to declare") are clear examples of Aramaic influence on the text. Greenstein writes that "the use of Aramaic is not only frequent but blatant."

exhibited by the authors of Job, who intentionally integrated *millin* into the text as a way to set the characters apart as being non-Judean and non-Israelite.

Dialect Consciousness as a Way of Marking Identity:

Throughout this dissertation, it has been argued that language and dialectal consciousness did not gain full traction as a pervasive textual phenomenon until the Late Biblical era, during a time when the Judean speech community experienced a surge in linguistic awareness as a result of their immersion and constant contact with speakers of various tongues. However, language consciousness has always been a discernible phenomenon in the textual history of ancient Israel, predating the time of exile and the sociolinguistic and political changes that transpired during this time period. Indeed, the trauma of deportation, coerced acculturation, and hostile interactions with disparate nations are all catalysts that resulted in Judean writers at the time developing a keener sense of self-awareness and ardent desire to assert their linguistic distinctiveness as a community. Nonetheless, individuals in ancient Israel had always had some sense of dialectal consciousness. The Biblical text documents numerous instances where individuals noticed differences in speech patterns, and these variations often became the defining criteria of ethnolinguistic boundaries. From the earliest of times, dialectal consciousness served as a marker of identity, and the Shibboleth incident documented in Judges 12 is the quintessential case study of how dialectal variation has palpable effects on the relationships between different communities. The extrapolation of theories from social psychology as well as linguistic anthropology has proven to be useful in order to elucidate the impact of dialect consciousness on the political and social aspects of life in Ancient Israel.

Individuals frequently use differences in speech as a metric to determine and consolidate otherwise arbitrary boundaries between themselves and others. Conversely, perceived similarities allow people to form bonds more easily and develop a sense of collective identity with members belonging to the same linguistic unit. In social psychology, enforced inclusion or exclusion that derive from perceptions of likeness or incompatibility are referred to as “ingroups” and “outgroups.”⁴⁶⁴ In linguistic anthropology, one of the key criteria for determining compatibility (or the lack of it) is the native vernacular of an individual. Whether or not someone can achieve admission into a particular social enclave is highly dependent on the perceived resemblance in speech patterns. Gudykunst writes: “The language or dialect speakers use provides cues that allows to determine if speakers are members of an ingroup or on outgroup.”⁴⁶⁵ Of course, the great dilemma for sociolinguists and anthropologists is the obscurity and arbitrariness regarding the specific linguistic qualifications necessary for admission into a particular social group. The criteria for belonging to a specific ingroup are not empirical; they have to do with individual perception and are therefore highly subjective and variable. For the study of modern languages and communication, the plethora of data and access to various gradients of linguistic variation facilitate the documentation and appraisal of what constitutes the standards for ingroup inclusion. While it is certain that linguistic inclusivity and exclusivity must have existed and operated in the same contexts as today, the dearth of data complicates this scholarly endeavor of determining what speakers deemed admissible and not.

⁴⁶⁴ Henri Tajfel, “Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination.” *Scientific American* 223, no. 5 (1970): 96

⁴⁶⁵ William B. Gudykunst and Karen L. Schmidt. “Language and Ethnic Identity: An Overview and Prologue.” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 6, no. 3–4 (1987): 157

The impact of language on the formation and conceptualization of intergroup relations is immense and multifaceted, as social psychologists Howard Giles and Ellen Bouchard Ryan have contended in their study of intergroup attitudes that develop as the direct consequence of perceived linguistic commonalities or dissimilarities.

A certain language, or speech style, can often be a necessary attribute for membership in a particular ethnic group, a salient cue for interethnic categorization, an important dimension of ethnic identity, and an ideal medium for facilitating intragroup cohesion.⁴⁶⁶

However, it is important to note that even small differences, such as “speech style,” can have significant impact on the perception of speakers and their sense of community. Again, this has to do with the inherent arbitrariness and subjectivity in determining membership to a social or ethnic community. Oftentimes, the actual and quantifiable level of linguistic variability has little to do with the attitude of speakers and their collective reaction to these differences. For instance, minute linguistic nuances can be exaggerated for the purposes of excluding certain individuals, while remarkably large disparities may be overlooked in order to secure the membership of others. Language variability and attitudes of speakers toward it do not conform to any natural formula or relationship of proportionality. Speakers of one dialect may easily gain acceptance in the mainstream, while speakers of another may be rejected. In fact, even the term “dialect” itself is problematic because there are no universal standards for determining what constitutes a dialect or a language.⁴⁶⁷ Although “language” has a strong impact on the formation social and ethnic

⁴⁶⁶ Ellen Bouchard Ryan, Miles Hewstone, and Howard Giles. "Language and Intergroup Attitudes." *Attitudinal judgment*, (New York: Springer, 1984), 135-158.

⁴⁶⁷ Einar Haugen. "Dialect, Language, Nation." *American Anthropologist* 68, no. 4 (1966): 922. On attempting to answer the question of what constitutes a language and what constitutes a dialect, Haugen writes, "Aside from the fact that a great many, perhaps most, languages and dialects have not yet been adequately studied and described, it is inherent in the very terms themselves that no answer can be given. They represent a simple dichotomy in a situation that is almost infinitely complex. Hence they have come

identities as well as the on the shaping of intergroup relations, the criteria for defining it are vague. The standards for what constitute acceptable language and which interlocutors are worthy of ethnic-social inclusion are variable and are dependent on the whims of the dominant speech community. The collection of speakers' subjective perceptions often develops into *language ideologies*. According to linguistic anthropologists Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal, language ideologies "locate linguistic phenomena as part of and evidence for what they believe to be systematic behavioral, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts among the social groups indexed."⁴⁶⁸ Nonetheless, these perceptions of "behavior, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts" are constantly in flux and subject to vary depending on the intersection of numerous external factors, such as changing social and political conditions.

Variability of Ingroup Membership: Judges 12 as a Case Study

The defining criteria of ingroup membership are variable and reflect changes in the social and political backdrop of a particular period. One of the most important attestations to the unstable nature of intergroup relations and the linguistic criteria characterizing them can be found in Judges 12. The eruption of internal strife among the tribes of Israel led to a large-scale massacre of the Ephraimites along the river Jordan. However, what is most intriguing and significant for this study is the means through which Ephraimites were singled out and labeled as members of an outgroup. One particular linguistic difference was accentuated and became the central diagnostic feature in determining who was an Ephraimite and to be slain immediately:

to be used to distinguish phenomena in several different dimensions, with resultant confusion and overlapping. The use of these terms has imposed a division in what is often a continuum, giving what appears to be a neat opposition when in fact the edges are extremely ragged and uncertain."

⁴⁶⁸ Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal. "Language ideology and linguistic differentiation," in *Linguistic anthropology: A reader*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Blackwell LTD, 2009), 403.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אָמַר-נָא שִׁבְלֵת וַיֹּאמֶר סִבְלֵת וְלֹא יָכִין לְדַבֵּר כֵּן וַיֹּאחֲזוּ אוֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁקְטוּהוּ אֶל-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן; וַיִּפֹּל בְּעַת

הַהִיא, מֵאֶפְרַיִם אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁנָיִם אֲלָף – שׁוֹפְטִים 12:6

Then said they unto him: 'Say now Shibboleth'; and he said 'Sibboleth'; for he could not frame to pronounce it right; then they laid hold on him, and slew him at the fords of the Jordan; and there fell at that time of Ephraim forty and two thousand. – Judges 12:6

The passage from Judges 12:6 is significant for a number of reasons. The reason the Ephraimites were caught linguistically off-guard has been a source of interest for scholars. Ronald Hendel attributes the Ephraimites' inability to pronounce the lexeme as a result of linguistic divergence and subsequent dialectal innovations, during which the Ephraimites retained the primordial Proto-Semitic consonant *s*₁, which had undergone a shift in the speech of their Gileadite counterpart, where it developed into the retroflex fricative *ʃ*.⁴⁶⁹ Other linguistic studies contend that the Ephraimites were unable to realize a dental *th* and therefore corrupted its pronunciation by articulating it as *s*.⁴⁷⁰ The ongoing debate pertaining to the phonological nuances and possible permutations is endless; however, this passage should stand out first and foremost for its sociolinguistic significance. Regardless of the actual articulation of the sibilant consonants, Judges 12:6 provides evidence of language consciousness and dialectal awareness. As such, this constitutes an important case study and helps us to understand language consciousness as a phenomenon during the Persian Period. In order for the Gileadites to spontaneously contrive such an effective mechanism to successfully distinguish Ephraimites from the rest of the population, they must have been aware of the tribe's distinct dialect. This familiarity with

⁴⁶⁹ Ronald S. Hendel, "Sibilants and Šibbōlet (Judges 12:6)." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 301 (1996): 69–75.

⁴⁷⁰ E. A. Speiser, "The Shibboleth Incident (Judges 12:6)." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 85 (1942): 10–13.

phonetic differences is predicated on sustained contact and interaction between members of both sides in the time leading up to the conflict.

Secondly, Judges 12:6 is significant because it shows the volatility of ingroup-outgroup perceptions and their liability to change and fluctuate, depending on external circumstances. Clearly, the Gileadites and Ephraimites previously had peaceful contact, which allowed for the natural observation and understanding of speech differences. One may even speculate that both groups perceived one another as members of a common ingroup – hence, the Ephraimites’ indignation that they were not invited to participate in the battle as would have been expected. However, as bilateral relations experienced sudden change, so too did the criteria for defining ingroup, with the Gileadites now altering their perception of the Ephraimites, deeming them to be members of an outgroup. In fact, Gileadite internal identity was suddenly strengthened in the midst of this friction, consolidated by their ability to pronounce certain phonemes and utter particular words in an “acceptable” way. Although the accent or means of speaking emerged as the critical factor in survival and death, it is important to note that differences in pronunciation are inherently innocuous and unremarkable. Linguistic differences are only given significance due to underlying political upheaval, where suddenly certain types of pronunciation are conferred negative associations and become markers of outsider status. Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress write:

The Ephraimite 's' would not have been fatal if there had not been hostility and conflict of interests between the two tribes. The energies attached to accents are social, not intrinsic to the sounds themselves; but this misperception is what makes conflicts over accents or languages seem so trivial to outsiders.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress. "Social semiotics, style and ideology." *Sociolinguistics*. (London: Palgrave, 1997), 49.

The social implications of this incident help us to better understand language consciousness as a phenomenon. Accents and differences in pronunciation are all relative. Language can be used as a tool to include or to exclude, depending on the agenda of the speaker at the time. Judges 12 demonstrates that variations in pronunciation once deemed admissible may suddenly become points of tension.

Anthropologist Richard Bauman comments on the Shibboleth incident and its implications for understanding the formation of identity and social ties:

In this perspective, identity is an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others.⁴⁷²

According to Bauman, the newly consolidated Gileadite identity derived largely from the emphasis on their own common phonemic inventory is an “emergent construction.” Suddenly, they realized that they could set themselves apart from the Ephraimites and redefine the criteria of the in-group to exclude their adversaries. Bauman is also right to call these decisions the result of “situationally motivated selections,” confirming the spontaneity and volatility of defining who belongs to a specific ingroup or outgroup. The onset of a battle led to the sudden revision of the standards, and any shared sense of community (if it ever existed) was fractured, with language being wielded as a divisive tool.

⁴⁷² Richard Bauman, “Language, Identity, Performance,” *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association* 10, (2000): 1.

Language Attitudes

The fluidity of the criteria defining linguistic ingroups and demarcating speech communities from one another is astonishing. The Shibboleth incident is an excellent case in point, demonstrating how linguistic bias stems from surrounding political tension and cultural conflicts. Ostensible trivialities have enormous social import for speakers and their communities. Moreover, there have severe and often irreversible consequences for those who experience exclusion due to the sudden modifications to the standards of belonging, such as the death of forty-two thousand Ephraimites. These linguistic biases that develop in response to shifts in circumstances or collective mentalities are known in linguistic anthropology as *language attitudes*, and these attitudes are responsible for shaping our perceptions, prejudices, and predisposed behaviors toward others. Aaron Cargile writes, “Our views of others – their supposed capabilities, beliefs, and attitudes – are determined in part by inferences we make from the language features they adopt.”⁴⁷³ Otherwise innocuous features of natural linguistic/dialectal variation have a visible impact and manifold ramifications on the relationships between individuals as well as between communities of people, based on the connotations or values that we assign to them.

The development of generalized language attitudes may confirm and provide evidence for the existence of language consciousness. Modern linguistic anthropological studies assess and qualify language attitudes by employing a methodological approach known as the “speaker evaluation paradigm,”⁴⁷⁴ where speakers are exposed to an audio sample of a language or accent

⁴⁷³ Aaron C. Cargile, et al. "Language attitudes as a social process: A conceptual model and new directions." *Language & Communication* 14, no.3 (1994): 211.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

and asked to record what kind of feelings and affective reactions are evoked from listening to it. Language and dialect consciousness underlie these experiments, as participants can detect and discern subtle variations in speech. This linguistic awareness is the most essential and fundamental element in the formation of language attitudes; it is imperative that speakers be cognizant of the differences, after which they may develop positive, neutral, or negative attitudes to that particular accent, dialect, or set of linguistic features. Developing and then vocalizing these predisposed perceptions are the result of an active neurological processes: “When people listen to a particular speaker, their reaction can be affective as well as cognitive in nature.”⁴⁷⁵ The cognitive aspect of listening is important for showing the centrality of linguistic consciousness to the emergence and crystallization of language attitudes and cultural perceptions. Extrapolating the data from linguistic anthropology and applying it to the text, one understands the dynamics surrounding the language attitudes toward the Ephraimite vernacular of Hebrew. The distinctive (or anomalous) features of their speech evoked a negative reaction. The inability to articulate a certain phoneme elicited a negative response from the Gileadites. The *shibboleth/sibboleth* ordeal was not only a means to effectively segregate Ephraimites from the remaining populace, but it also constituted a visible manifestation of language attitudes held by speakers.

The Shibboleth Incident from the Lens of Linguistic Anthropology: Language Ideology

The investigation of language attitudes and their impact of the relations between individuals and communities forms part of a greater discussion surrounding *language ideology*, defined as a “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or

⁴⁷⁵ Aaron Cargile and Howard Giles, “Understanding language attitudes: Exploring listener affect and identity,” *Language & Communication* 17, no.3 (1997): 196

justification of perceived language structure and use.”⁴⁷⁶ In other words, language attitudes comprise a central role in these “set of beliefs” that dictate how individuals from different speech communities interact and receive one another. The study of language ideologies confers access to the diversity within the realm of human communication and also allows for the problematization of linguistic variation.⁴⁷⁷ Furthermore, the incorporation of linguistic anthropological resources into the analysis of the Shibboleth incident and the study of language variation within Biblical languages proves to be a useful endeavor in that it approaches linguistic contact and communicative practices as the product of real-life interactions rather than simply a textual phenomenon. Just as language ideologies exist as divisive forces today, they also would have operated during the time ancient Hebrew was spoken as a living language.

Language ideology is pertinent for linguistic consciousness. In fact, anthropologist Jillian R. Cavanaugh writes that “language ideology emerges out of a twin focus on the linguistic awareness of speakers and the non-referential function of language.”⁴⁷⁸ The existence of

⁴⁷⁶ Kathryn A. Woolard and Bambi B. Schieffelin. "Language ideology." *Annual review of anthropology* 23, no.1, (1994): 55.

⁴⁷⁷ Paul V. Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 497.

Kroskrity writes, “Since social and linguistic variation provide some of the dynamic forces which influence change, it is more useful to have an analytical device which captures diversity rather than emphasizing a static, uniformly shared culture. Used in opposition to culture, language ideologies provide an alternative for exploring variation in ideas, ideals, and communicative practices.”

⁴⁷⁸ Jillian R. Cavanaugh, “Language Ideologies and Language Attitudes: A Linguistic Anthropological Perspective.” in *Language Variation – European Perspectives IV: Selected Papers from the Sixth International Conference on Language Variation in Europe*, ed. Peter Auer, et. al (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 46-47. For more regarding language ideology, c.f also Paul V. Kroskrity, “Regimenting Languages: language ideological perspectives.” *Regimes of Language. Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, 2000).

language ideologies is a direct attestation to the existence of underlying linguistic consciousness with speakers being perceptive regarding the nature of the differences in speech and communicative style. These perceptions are subsumed in a collective cognitive process that leads to the development of a common ideology and negative or positive attitudes toward individuals and groups discerned as exhibiting those distinguishing features. Language consciousness is a powerful force that operates in the backdrop, becoming manifest during critical moments, such as the confrontation between the Gileadites and Ephraimites in Judges 12. In essence, language ideologies are the corollary of long-term linguistic awareness which become manifest during moments of tension or intercultural friction. As mentioned previously, the Gileadites had long been aware of the phonetic anomalies of Ephraimite speech. Whether this observation had developed into an ideology before the eruption of conflict is uncertain, but it emerged as an unmistakable force during the war. Language ideologies often are the beliefs that certain speech patterns are superior or inferior;⁴⁷⁹ in Judges 12, Ephraimites were depicted as speaking a corrupt version of Hebrew, as they mispronounced the sibilant sound. The negative connotation associated with their manner of speaking is a clear sign of language ideology at play and underlying speaker awareness.

Iconization

In order to argue the significance of the role of linguistic ideology in determining the trajectory of events in the Shibboleth passage, one must also give special attention to the sub-phenomena that comprise language ideology and that are also responsible for its emergence and

⁴⁷⁹ Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 497

manifestation in various speech communities. Anthropologists Judith Irvine and Susan Gal have identified three characteristic behaviors exhibited by speakers that attest to the existence and implementation of language ideologies: *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*.⁴⁸⁰ By isolating the three common variables that underlie all language ideologies, their research has facilitated the extrapolation and analysis of garnered data in order to determine whether certain intercommunal interactions could be ascribed to the shared set of beliefs that interlocutors hold regarding language. In this chapter, we examine the first characteristic in Judges 12.

The first process responsible for the creation of language ideology is *iconization*, where individuals attach disproportionate significance to one salient feature in the speech of another group of people. This one particular element comes to represent the entire linguistic and cultural essence of that community.⁴⁸¹ In other words, a specific quality is accentuated and “iconized” in the perception of speakers of a particular language or dialect. Iconization refers to the creation of a cultural-linguistic synecdoche, where individuals of a speech community are represented solely by the presence of a single distinctive feature of their linguistic habits. Finegan and Rickford write: “Participants’ ideologies about language locate – and sometimes even generate – linguistic phenomena as part of, and evidence for, what they believe to be systematic behavioral, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts.”⁴⁸² It is astonishing that a single element of a person’s speech can be interpreted to be representative of their character and social status, yet this is a sociolinguistic condition that has visible effects on the reciprocal relations between linguistic communities.

⁴⁸⁰ Irvine and Gal, “Language ideology and linguistic differentiation.,” 402-427.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴⁸² Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity, *Language ideologies: Practice and theory*. (Oxford University Press, 1998), 328.

Social stereotypes are projected onto people based on their way of speaking,⁴⁸³ as both speech and behavioral patterns become intertwined and viewed as an inherent part of an individual. Iconization is an effective means to illustrate the affinity between vernacular differences and non-linguistic generalizations, as manner of speaking and behavior are equated with one another. When applying this linguistic anthropological research to Judges 12, one can see the effects of language ideology on early intertribal relations in the Hebrew Bible. Allan Bell in his 2014 monograph *The Guidebook to Sociolinguistics* cites the Shibboleth incident as an example of iconization, where this process “became a matter of life or death.”⁴⁸⁴

Iconization provides a reasonable explanation for how one characteristic of Ephraimite speech – the inability to articulate *š* – was accentuated and came to represent the other negative traits associated with the tribe. Although unrelated and existing independently of one another, the *s/š* confusion was conflated with the Ephraimites’ hostile behavior and came to be representative of their nature as individuals. The reputation of the entire tribe – its acrimonious behaviors and spiteful acts – were directly associated with their inability to pronounce “shibboleth” correctly.

⁴⁸³ Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford, *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-First Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 361. The primary example here is how adolescents are perceived in general by the adult population to be sloppy and careless, and their speech patterns reflect this. However, this is a consequence of iconization, where the characteristics of “sloppiness” are directly associated with adolescents’ style of speaking. A inherent connection has been made between the two in the minds of others, regardless whether or not such a connection actually exists.

⁴⁸⁴ Allan Bell, *The Guidebook to Sociolinguistics*, (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 256. Bell writes, “Although the association between the linguistic feature and the group is arbitrary, the feature is treated as somehow having a natural and inherent link with the group. In the Hebrew story of ‘shibboleth,’ this iconization became a matter of life or death.” However, it is important to note that this view is not fully representative of all scholarship in linguistic anthropology and only represents a single view regarding the issue. Judith Irvine herself when asked did not believe that Shibboleth represented an instance of *iconization*. However, we have chosen to argue that iconization was indeed a visible process during this event.

“Ashdodite” as an Example of Dialect Consciousness

The previous examples taken from the Elisha-Elijah narratives, Job, and Judges 12 are case studies of how dialect consciousness functions throughout the Biblical text. Examining these texts helps to frame our understanding of the phenomenon and to apply it in our examination of Persian Period literature. Dialect consciousness in Persian Period literature can be clearly seen in Nehemiah 13, where we have the only mention of a non-Judean language known as “Ashdodite” within the Hebrew Bible.

וּבְנֵיהֶם חָצִי מְדַבֵּר אֲשֶׁדּוּדִית וְאֵינָם מְכִירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית וְכָל־שׁוֹן עִם וְעַם.
And their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Judean language, but according to the language of each people. – Nehemiah 13:24

In this passage, Nehemiah expresses dismay that the progeny of the Judeans is no longer able to speak the Judean language, *Yehudit* (יהודית). Instead, they had linguistically assimilated, adopting the languages of the surrounding peoples. One of the languages is given the appellation “Ashdodite” (אשדודית), and the nature of this language has become a subject of debate among Biblical scholars. David Talshir has theorized that it is possible that Ashdodite originated as an unstandardized vernacular of Hebrew spoken in the lowlands near Philistia.⁴⁸⁵ Talshir, however, provides little evidence to corroborate his claim. M. Dothan claims that their language was a dialect descended from Phoenician.⁴⁸⁶ However, Ingo Kottsieper believes that Ashdodite was a

⁴⁸⁵ David Talshir, “The Habitat and History of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period,” *Biblical Hebrew* (2003): 251-275.

⁴⁸⁶ M. Dothan, “Ashdod: Preliminary Report on the Excavations in Seasons 1962/1963.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 14, no. ½ (1964): 88.

linguistic offshoot of Aramaic that was spoken along the Levantine coast.⁴⁸⁷ For the purposes of our study, we will follow the opinion that Ashdodite was a colloquial variety of Aramaic. This is important for understanding dialect consciousness. As mentioned in chapter five, Aramaic was likely diglossic, as the spoken varieties of the language differed significantly from the written counterpart, and the Judeans were also aware of this distinction. Therefore, they referred to the tongue of the local Aramaic speakers not as “Aramaic” but rather as “Ashodidte.” The appellation “Ashdodite” betrays a high sense of dialect consciousness and understanding the differences between written and spoken language, and in order to accentuate this awareness of the disparity between the two, Ashdodite and Aramaic are perceived and depicted as two entirely separate languages.

As far as primary texts for reconstructing the Ashdodite language/vernacular Aramaic dialect of Ashdod, the epigraphic evidence is scanty. We have one ostrakon discovered in Ashdod that dates to the fifth century B.C.E., containing the words כרם זבדיה (“Zebadiah’s vineyard”).⁴⁸⁸ The brevity of the inscription reveals little information about the Semitic dialect spoken in Ashdod. Another fragment has been found containing the word פחר (“potter”) which is a characteristically Aramaic lexeme.⁴⁸⁹ The discovery of this one word has led scholars like Kottsieper to surmise that Ashdodite was indeed descended from Aramaic. However, what is

⁴⁸⁷ Ingo Kottsieper, “‘And They Did not Care to Speak Yehudit’: On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era.” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschitz, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 101.

⁴⁸⁸ Joseph Naveh, “Aramaic Ostraca and Jar Inscriptions from Tell Jemmeh.” *Atiqot* 21 (1992): 50.

⁴⁸⁹ Dothan, *Ashdod II-III*, 22.

most significant is that the inscription uses the Aramaic script,⁴⁹⁰ cementing the linguistic connection between Ashdodite and Aramaic and confirming our previous contention that Ashdodite was indeed a variant of Aramaic that was treated as an independent language because the Judeans perceived the two to be distinct different from one another.

Although the amount of epigraphic evidence for Ashdodite is extremely limited, we can supplement the material by looking at other inscriptions written in related Aramaic dialects. Based on the geographic location of Ashdod in Philistia, we can argue that the local Ashdodite vernacular was probably intelligible to other speech communities living in the Philistine coastal plain. Therefore, the inscriptions left behind by these communities serve as close approximates to Ashdodite, allowing us to form more accurate conjectures regarding the speech of the people in the region. One inscription from Maresha, an archaeological site located in the Shephelah region, is of particular interest. It is an Edomite marriage contract dated to 176 B.C.E.; however, the language and script is Aramaic.⁴⁹¹



⁴⁹⁰ Moshe Dothan, *Ashdod II-III: The Second and Third Excavations, Soundings in 1967, Volume I*, (The Department of Antiquities and Museums in the Ministry of Education and Culture, 1971), 22.

⁴⁹¹ Esther Eshel and Amos Kloner, “An Aramaic Ostrakon of an Edomite Marriage Contract from Maresha, Dated 176 B.C.E.,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 46 (1996): 1.

Figure 3: Inscription found at Tel Maresha⁴⁹²

As we can see from the inscription, the script is clearly Aramaic, revealing that Aramaic dialects were indeed spoken off the coast of Philistia. The language of the text contains a number of words that are unmistakably Aramaic in nature, such as בתולתא (“virgin”) with the characteristic Aramaic definite article, אנה (“I”), and בר (“son”). The existence of these pronounced Aramaic features in the inscription has allowed archaeologists to easily identify the language in which it is written. Because Maresha itself is located a mere 56 kilometers from the city of Ashdod, it is quite plausible that the form of Aramaic spoken in this site would have been intelligible with the Ashdodite vernacular mentioned in Nehemiah 13:24. Aramaic was likely widely spoken in the region; in Maresha alone between the years of 1989-1994, thirty-six Aramaic ostraca were uncovered.⁴⁹³ Moreover, in the surrounding Idumea province (in which Maresha is located), a total of 1,400 legible Aramaic inscriptions have been found.⁴⁹⁴ The most important thing to emphasize is that all of these ostraca and texts are written in the Aramaic script, meaning that they used the Aramaic alphabet and language for writing regarding of differences that existed on the vernacular level. It is difficult on the basis of epigraphic evidence alone to determine the precise extent of differences between Official Aramaic and regional vernacular dialects, yet the most important for our purpose is to establish that Aramaic was indeed spoken in and around the vicinity of Ashdod during the Persian Period. However, for the

⁴⁹² Ibid., 2.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹⁴ André Lemaire, “New Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea and Their Historical Interpretation,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 413.

Judeans, the Aramaic spoken in Ashdod differed enough that it was perceived to be an independent language, and it is this perception that is important for our study.

Regardless of the actual linguistic classification of Ashdodite (as the evidence is inconclusive), it is much more significant to examine the sociolinguistic implications of its appearance in the Biblical text. If Ashdodite was indeed a dialect related to Aramaic, why did the authors grant it a distinct appellation, treating it as an independent language? This naming would constitute yet another instance of dialectal consciousness operating as an underlying force in the postexilic Judean community. While Hebrew and Aramaic had become incorporated as integral components of the Judean linguistic profile, one may presume that other local varieties did not achieve the same level of acceptance within the community. Therefore, even if Ashdodite were intelligible, it would have been rejected due to its association with a foreign entity. Schniedewind suggests: “The description of this foreign language as ‘Ashdodite’ is socially loaded, especially since the language was probably some dialect of Aramaic.”⁴⁹⁵ Regardless of the actual linguistic proximity of Ashdodite to Aramaic, it was important for the authors of the text to purposely make a distinction and set the language apart for sociological and political reasons. In order to assert Judean identity, foreign elements were viewed as undesirable and hence needed to be excised. Ashdodite, therefore, represented foreignness in the minds of the authors, who were distraught that the Judean community had begun to intermarry with members of that speech community. Regardless of the actual intelligibility and lexical similarity between Ashdodite and other Aramaic dialects, the former is considered to be its own language because of political purposes. The Ashdodites are considered to be foreigners; therefore, their linguistic variety must

⁴⁹⁵ William M. Schniedewind, "Prolegomena for the sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew." *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004).

also be considered foreign. In this case, the demarcation of dialects and languages is strictly rooted in sociology and collective perceptions. Similar to the Shibboleth episode, the criteria for excluding speakers of Ashdodite from the Judean in-group are arbitrary and reflective of the current political situation. Dialect consciousness is a powerful force that instigates discord and categorizes people according to perceived differences in speech.

Summary of the Manifestations of Dialect Consciousness in the Hebrew Bible

A closely related phenomenon to language consciousness, dialect consciousness has left an indelible impact on the Biblical text. Most individuals have a generalized awareness of other vernaculars differing from their native variety; however, Biblical authors exhibited a sophisticated understanding of the linguistic nuances and isoglosses that distinguished various dialects of Hebrew from one another as well as elements that would render Hebrew more foreign-sounding. Their ingenuity can be seen in the way they manipulate the written word to reflect differences in spoken language, embedding dialectal elements during appropriate occasions. This can be seen unequivocally through the use of Northern Hebrew in the narratives of Elisha and Elijah, prophets of northern heritage, as well as an Aramaicized dialect of Hebrew in the Biblical accounts of Laban and Job in order to underscore their foreign ethnicity. These alignment of language and literary content would have been unmistakable to the readers.

Furthermore, the formation of linguistic ideologies and identities is a corollary of language/dialect consciousness. Speakers often assert their own identity by accentuating otherwise arbitrary linguistic features and subtle distinctions in order to distinguish themselves. The identities of some communities are sometimes based entirely on the unique features of their speech patterns.

The mention of Ashdodite in Nehemiah 13 Bible is yet another instance of acute dialect consciousness. Although Ashdodite was in all likelihood a mutually intelligible dialect of Aramaic, a language well-understood by post-exilic Judeans, it was granted a distinct appellation in order to mark it as a foreign language and to exclude its speakers from the Judean community. Dialect consciousness is primarily a sociological phenomenon, as it pays little heed to the extent of actual linguistic differences between varieties. It simply has to do with speakers' perception of these differences and how they have become internalized to serve as markers of identity, ethnicity, and in-group belonging.

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION

Summary and Conclusions

This study has examined language consciousness as a textual phenomenon within the Hebrew Bible. While language consciousness can be found throughout the corpus of Biblical literature, it is during the Persian Period that it becomes particularly acute. The destruction of the Temple followed by the deportation of the Judeans to Babylon becomes a critical juncture in their history. The removal from their traditional homeland results in the intensification of the desire to preserve their identity and cultural identity, during a time when the reigning regimes attempted to coerce acculturation and assimilation of the diasporic Judean communities. These assimilatory practices were indeed effective; for example, the imposition of Aramaic as a language of generalized communication within the Empire resulted in Hebrew becoming relegated to a localized language of religion and spirituality. Furthermore, the monopoly of Aramaic can be seen in the abundance of loan words in Biblical literature during this time, as well as the fact that the Judean community adopted the Aramaic script to write Hebrew. Bilingualism became common, and it is the first of three sociolinguistic conditions that accentuated language consciousness during the Persian Period.

Although Aramaic occupied an increasingly important role, it did not completely supplant Hebrew as the language of the community. In fact, we see that both languages co-existed, which each tongue being conferred a different function and purpose. The books of Ezra and Daniel are quintessential examples of this. In Ezra, Aramaic is used to represent the authenticity of formal correspondence with governmental officials, while Hebrew serves as the language of community, used to document the affairs and religious rites of the Judean returnees in Jerusalem. The narrative of Ezra is composed in both tongues, and the content between the

Aramaic and Hebrew sections have no overlap; instead, they come together to form a coherent narrative, while representing the real life functions of language within the community. In the book of Daniel, Hebrew is the language used to chronicle the deportation of Daniel and his comrades to Babylon and their struggle to resist self-defilement and enforced assimilation. The book then switches to Aramaic in order to mirror the contextual transition to the regal court, where interactions between the king and his advisors takes place in Aramaic. The Aramaic chapters of Daniel all concern themselves with official matters, politics, and executive decisions of the king. Hebrew is used again at the end to document the visions of Daniel and functions as the language of eschatology. The study of bilingualism within these two books allows for the better appreciation of the intentionality behind the appearance of each language. This linguistic consciousness is unmistakable, as the scenes and structure of the books replicate real life scenarios and context of language use. During the Persian Period, Aramaic is widely learned as a second language and comes together with Hebrew to form the Judean linguistic profile. Consciously using both languages becomes an expression of Judean identity, at a time when their cultural heritage is being actively undermined by the turmoil of the exile.

A second sociolinguistic condition responsible for heightening language consciousness during the Persian Period is diglossia, where speakers are familiar with two distinct registers of the same language. I have shown that both Hebrew and Aramaic were diglossic languages, with the oral vernaculars being different from their written counterparts. Modern studies of speakers of diglossic languages have shown that these individuals exert great cognitive effort and develop strong awareness of linguistic differences, as a result of constantly navigating two forms of the same language. In fact, their awareness is equivalent to that of bilinguals who speak two completely different languages. The language situation of the Judean community in Jerusalem

during the Persian Persian was complex: not only was it divided between Hebrew and Aramaic, but each language had a written and oral version. This results in four distinct strands that constituted the linguistic profile of the community – written Hebrew, vernacular Hebrew, written Aramaic (official Aramaic), and vernacular Aramaic. The Judean community was not only bilingual, but it was also diglossic. Levels of linguistic awareness were elevated by the constant switching back and forth between different registers of Hebrew and Aramaic.

The third sociolinguistic condition that accentuates levels of language consciousness is dialectal variety. The abundance of dialects within a particular language renders speakers more aware of subtle nuances and features that separate dialects from one another. This cognizance regarding the distinguish features of vernacular varieties is also known as “dialect consciousness.” The mention of Ashdodite in Nehemiah 13, in particular, is an excellent case study of how dialectal consciousness was featured in the Judean linguistic landscape. Although it has been shown that Ashdodite was likely a dialect of Aramaic, it was granted a unique appellation by the Judean community, meaning that they considered the two to be completely separate entities. Aramaic, especially the Imperial variety, was very familiar to the Judeans; however, Ashdodite exhibited significant differences that led to the perception that it was a different language altogether, in spite of its linguistic taxonomy indicating otherwise. Speakers of dialect-rich languages become attuned to minute elements and isoglosses separating their oral variety from those of others. Although dialect consciousness has been seen previously (most notably, the Shibboleth incident), it is during the Persian Period that the phenomenon becomes crystalized. The increasing demographic diversity of the region during this time led to the Judeans frequently encountering members of different dialect communities, resulting in them developing an increased awareness of linguistic nuances.

In short, the Persian Period is a critical period in Judean history that left an indelible effect on the nature of literary composition. Tumultuous demographic, social, and political changes led to the displacement of ethnolinguistic communities from their traditional boundaries and resulted in an unprecedented amount of intermingling and cross-cultural contact. New linguistic phenomena arose in response to the shifts in the political arena, with individuals learning new languages and diversifying their linguistic repertoire. While language consciousness certainly existed before the Persian Period, it becomes increasingly sophisticated during this time. The collective effect of bilingualism, diglossia, and dialectal variety may have been the reason for the noticeable increase of linguistic awareness during this time. Late Biblical literature in particular has been shaped by authorial cognizance regarding the role of language, dialectal differences, and the importance of language as a means of asserting identity.

Direction for Future Research

This study has focused primarily on the origins of language consciousness and has sought to isolate the sociolinguistic variables that contributed most significantly to its surge during the Persian Period. Nonetheless, the manifestations of language consciousness are manifold. While I have employed a literary-critical approach in analyzing Late Biblical literature, linguistic awareness can be seen in different ways both inside and outside of the Biblical corpus. By restricting the study to the Judean community in Jerusalem during the Persian Period, one must concentrate solely on the literature relevant to the time period.

Future studies regarding language consciousness can draw more from other sources and explore how linguistic awareness manifests itself in the epigraphic corpus as well as post-biblical literature. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumranic Hebrew would be a fascinating data set to examine in greater detail, replete with nuances in language and literary decisions that most

certainly can be traced back to linguistic awareness. In fact, Qumranic Hebrew has numerous synthetic elements – neoclassical features innovated by writers in order to replicate an earlier stratum of the Hebrew language. Moreover, the relative dearth of explicitly Aramaic-like words seems to be the result of an active effort to excise non-Hebraic features from this new linguistic paradigm. The writing of the Dead Sea Scrolls represents a deliberate attempt to create a novel standard of Hebrew – one that divorces itself from external linguistic influences in order to align itself with an earlier stage of the language.⁴⁹⁶ The ideological drive behind the composition of Qumranic texts is worth investigating, as it propels language consciousness to a new level.

In addition, future studies need not be restricted to literary-critical discussions of the text and can explore other expression of language consciousness. One interesting point for further research would be script choice. Mentioned cursorily in this dissertation, script choice is often the product of linguistic awareness and can be used as a way to assert linguistic autonomy and cultural liberation. Such a study could investigate the way script is used in the modern world to indicate political alliances and cultural solidarity (the Arabic script across the Islamic world, the Cyrillic script in Post-Soviet space) and how script reform correlates to changes in the perception of one's identity. Likewise, the change from the Paleo-Hebrew to the Aramaic letters represents a clear shift in the ideology and cultural narrative of the Judean diaspora.

Better understanding the phenomenon of language consciousness represents a new avenue in Biblical studies. By identifying different manifestations of linguistic awareness, one can better understand the intentionality behind the written word and how Biblical literature is the product of a people working to assert their identity and preserve their cultural legacy.

⁴⁹⁶ This is a linguistic anthropological phenomenon known as “purism.” For further reading on the topic, see: Paul Kroskrity, “Arizona Tewa Speech as a Manifestation of a Dominant Language Ideology,” in *Language Ideologies*, edited by Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 103-122.

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